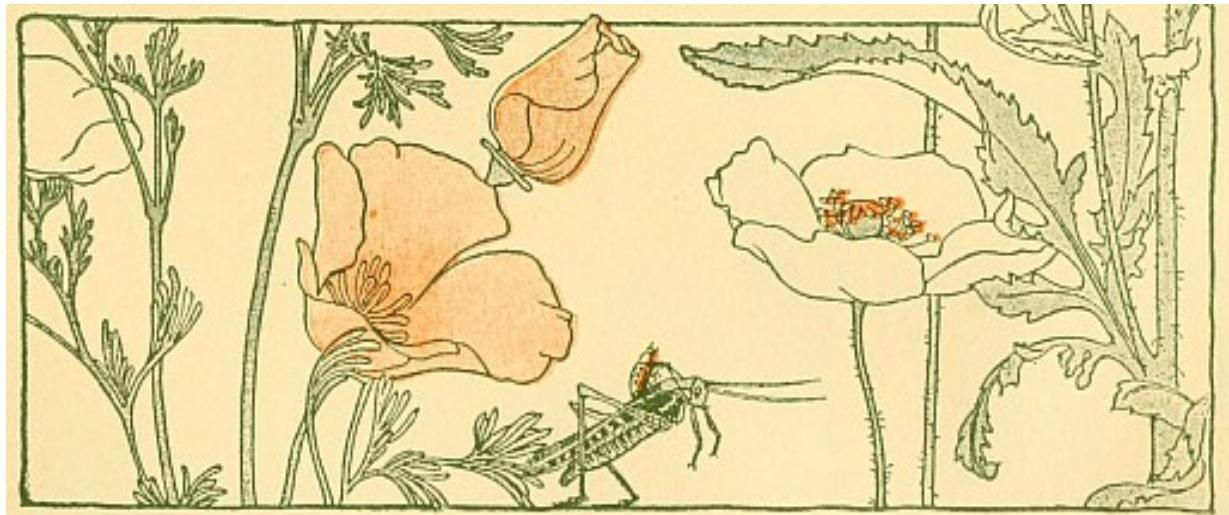


PLAYS AND POETRY

SEPTEMBER 2020



ALL FOR LOVE

or

THE WORLD WELL LOST

From the Project Gutenberg EBook of *All for Love*, by John Dryden

A TRAGEDY

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

MARK ANTONY.

VENTIDIUS, his General.

DOLABELLA, his Friend.

ALEXAS, the Queen's Eunuch.

SERAPION, Priest of Isis.

MYRIS, another Priest.

Servants to Antony.

CLEOPATRA, Queen of Egypt.

OCTAVIA, Antony's Wife.

CHARMION, Cleopatra's Maid.

IRAS, Cleopatra's Maid.

Antony's two little Daughters.

SCENE.--Alexandria.

Act I

Scene I.--The Temple of Isis

Enter SERAPION, MYRIS, Priests of Isis

SERAPION. Portents and prodigies have grown so frequent,
That they have lost their name. Our fruitful Nile
Flowed ere the wonted season, with a torrent
So unexpected, and so wondrous fierce,
That the wild deluge overtook the haste
Even of the hinds that watched it: Men and beasts
Were borne above the tops of trees, that grew
On the utmost margin of the water-mark.
Then, with so swift an ebb the flood drove backward,
It slipt from underneath the scaly herd:
Here monstrous phocae panted on the shore;
Forsaken dolphins there with their broad tails,
Lay lashing the departing waves: hard by them,
Sea horses floundering in the slimy mud,
Tossed up their heads, and dashed the ooze about them.

Enter ALEXAS behind them

MYRIS. Avert these omens, Heaven!

SERAPION. Last night, between the hours of twelve and one,
In a lone aisle of the temple while I walked,
A whirlwind rose, that, with a violent blast,
Shook all the dome: the doors around me clapt;
The iron wicket, that defends the vault,
Where the long race of Ptolemies is laid,
Burst open, and disclosed the mighty dead.
From out each monument, in order placed,
An armed ghost starts up: the boy-king last
Reared his inglorious head. A peal of groans
Then followed, and a lamentable voice
Cried, Egypt is no more! My blood ran back,
My shaking knees against each other knocked;
On the cold pavement down I fell entranced,
And so unfinished left the horrid scene.

ALEXAS. And dreamed you this? or did invent the story,
[Showing himself.]
To frighten our Egyptian boys withal,

And train them up, betimes, in fear of priesthood?

SERAPION. My lord, I saw you not,
Nor meant my words should reach you ears; but what
I uttered was most true.

ALEXAS. A foolish dream,
Bred from the fumes of indigested feasts,
And holy luxury.

SERAPION. I know my duty:
This goes no further.

ALEXAS. 'Tis not fit it should;
Nor would the times now bear it, were it true.
All southern, from yon hills, the Roman camp
Hangs o'er us black and threatening like a storm
Just breaking on our heads.

SERAPION. Our faint Egyptians pray for Antony;
But in their servile hearts they own Octavius.

MYRIS. Why then does Antony dream out his hours,
And tempts not fortune for a noble day,
Which might redeem what Actium lost?

ALEXAS. He thinks 'tis past recovery.

SERAPION. Yet the foe
Seems not to press the siege.

ALEXAS. Oh, there's the wonder.
Maecenas and Agrippa, who can most
With Caesar, are his foes. His wife Octavia,
Driven from his house, solicits her revenge;
And Dolabella, who was once his friend,
Upon some private grudge, now seeks his ruin:
Yet still war seems on either side to sleep.

SERAPION. 'Tis strange that Antony, for some days past,
Has not beheld the face of Cleopatra;
But here, in Isis' temple, lives retired,
And makes his heart a prey to black despair.

ALEXAS. 'Tis true; and we much fear he hopes by absence
To cure his mind of love.

SERAPION. If he be vanquished,
Or make his peace, Egypt is doomed to be

A Roman province; and our plenteous harvests
Must then redeem the scarceness of their soil.
While Antony stood firm, our Alexandria
Rivalled proud Rome (dominion's other seat),
And fortune striding, like a vast Colossus,
Could fix an equal foot of empire here.

ALEXAS. Had I my wish, these tyrants of all nature,
Who lord it o'er mankind, rhowld perish,--perish,
Each by the other's sword; But, since our will
Is lamely followed by our power, we must
Depend on one; with him to rise or fall.

SERAPION. How stands the queen affected?

ALEXAS. Oh, she dotes,
She dotes, Serapion, on this vanquished man,
And winds herself about his mighty ruins;
Whom would she yet forsake, yet yield him up,
This hunted prey, to his pursuer's hands,
She might preserve us all: but 'tis in vain--
This changes my designs, this blasts my counsels,
And makes me use all means to keep him here.
Whom I could wish divided from her arms,
Far as the earth's deep centre. Well, you know
The state of things; no more of your ill omens
And black prognostics; labour to confirm
The people's hearts.

Enter VENTIDIUS, talking aside with a Gentleman of ANTONY'S

SERAPION. These Romans will o'erhear us.
But who's that stranger? By his warlike port,
His fierce demeanour, and erected look,
He's of no vulgar note.

ALEXAS. Oh, 'tis Ventidius,
Our emperor's great lieutenant in the East,
Who first showed Rome that Parthia could be conquered.
When Antony returned from Syria last,
He left this man to guard the Roman frontiers.

SERAPION. You seem to know him well.

ALEXAS. Too well. I saw him at Cilicia first,
When Cleopatra there met Antony:
A mortal foe was to us, and Egypt.
But,--let me witness to the worth I hate,--
A braver Roman never drew a sword;

Firm to his prince, but as a friend, not slave,
He ne'er was of his pleasures; but presides
O'er all his cooler hours, and morning counsels:
In short the plainness, fierceness, rugged virtue,
Of an old true-stampt Roman lives in him.
His coming bodes I know not what of ill
To our affairs. Withdraw to mark him better;
And I'll acquaint you why I sought you here,
And what's our present work.

[They withdraw to a corner of the stage; and VENTIDIUS,
with the other, comes forward to the front.]

VENTIDIUS. Not see him; say you?
I say, I must, and will.

GENTLEMAN. He has commanded,
On pain of death, none should approach his presence.

VENTIDIUS. I bring him news will raise his drooping spirits,
Give him new life.

GENTLEMAN. He sees not Cleopatra.

VENTIDIUS. Would he had never seen her!

GENTLEMAN. He eats not, drinks not, sleeps not, has no use
Of anything, but thought; or if he talks,
'Tis to himself, and then 'tis perfect raving:
Then he defies the world, and bids it pass,
Sometimes he gnaws his lips, and curses loud
The boy Octavius; then he draws his mouth
Into a scornful smile, and cries, "Take all,
The world's not worth my care."

VENTIDIUS. Just, just his nature.
Virtue's his path; but sometimes 'tis too narrow
For his vast soul; and then he starts out wide,
And bounds into a vice, that bears him far
From his first course, and plunges him in ills:
But, when his danger makes him find his faults,
Quick to observe, and full of sharp remorse,
He censures eagerly his own misdeeds,
Judging himself with malice to himself,
And not forgiving what as man he did,
Because his other parts are more than man--
He must not thus be lost.

[ALEXAS and the Priests come forward.]

ALEXAS. You have your full instructions, now advance,

Proclaim your orders loudly.

SERAPION. Romans, Egyptians, hear the queen's command.
Thus Cleopatra bids: Let labour cease;
To pomp and triumphs give this happy day,
That gave the world a lord: 'tis Antony's.
Live, Antony; and Cleopatra live!
Be this the general voice sent up to heaven,
And every public place repeat this echo.

VENTIDIUS. Fine pageantry!

[Aside.]

SERAPION. Set out before your doors
The images of all your sleeping fathers,
With laurels crowned; with laurels wreath your posts,
And strew with flowers the pavement; let the priests
Do present sacrifice; pour out the wine,
And call the gods to join with you in gladness.

VENTIDIUS. Curse on the tongue that bids this general joy!
Can they be friends of Antony, who revel
When Antony's in danger? Hide, for shame,
You Romans, your great grandsires' images,
For fear their souls should animate their marbles,
To blush at their degenerate progeny.

ALEXAS. A love, which knows no bounds, to Antony,
Would mark the day with honours, when all heaven
Laboured for him, when each propitious star
Stood wakeful in his orb, to watch that hour
And shed his better influence. Her own birthday
Our queen neglected like a vulgar fate,
That passed obscurely by.

VENTIDIUS. Would it had slept,
Divided far from his; till some remote
And future age had called it out, to ruin
Some other prince, not him!

ALEXAS. Your emperor,
Though grown unkind, would be more gentle, than
To upbraid my queen for loving him too well.

VENTIDIUS. Does the mute sacrifice upbraid the priest!
He knows him not his executioner.
Oh, she has decked his ruin with her love,
Led him in golden bands to gaudy slaughter,
And made perdition pleasing: She has left him

The blank of what he was.
I tell thee, eunuch, she has quite unmanned him.
Can any Roman see, and know him now,
Thus altered from the lord of half mankind,
Unbent, unsinewed, made a woman's toy,
Shrunk from the vast extent of all his honours,
And cramp't within a corner of the world?

O Antony!
Thou bravest soldier, and thou best of friends!
Bounteous as nature; next to nature's God!
Couldst thou but make new worlds, so wouldest thou give them,
As bounty were thy being! rough in battle,
As the first Romans when they went to war;
Yet after victory more pitiful
Than all their praying virgins left at home!

ALEXAS. Would you could add, to those more shining virtues,
His truth to her who loves him.

VENTIDIUS. Would I could not!
But wherefore waste I precious hours with thee!
Thou art her darling mischief, her chief engine,
Antony's other fate. Go, tell thy queen,
Ventidius is arrived, to end her charms.
Let your Egyptian timbrels play alone,
Nor mix effeminate sounds with Roman trumpets,
You dare not fight for Antony; go pray
And keep your cowards' holiday in temples.

[Exeunt ALEXAS, SERAPION.]

Re-enter the Gentleman of M. ANTONY

2 Gent. The emperor approaches, and commands,
On pain of death, that none presume to stay.

1 Gent. I dare not disobey him.
[Going out with the other.]

VENTIDIUS. Well, I dare.
But I'll observe him first unseen, and find
Which way his humour drives: The rest I'll venture.
[Withdraws.]

Enter ANTONY, walking with a disturbed motion before
he speaks

ANTONY. They tell me, 'tis my birthday, and I'll keep it
With double pomp of sadness.
'Tis what the day deserves, which gave me breath.

Why was I raised the meteor of the world,
Hung in the skies, and blazing as I travelled,
'Till all my fires were spent; and then cast downward,
To be trod out by Caesar?

VENTIDIUS. [aside.] On my soul,
'Tis mournful, wondrous mournful!

ANTONY. Count thy gains.
Now, Antony, wouldst thou be born for this?
Glutton of fortune, thy devouring youth
Has starved thy wanting age.

VENTIDIUS. How sorrow shakes him!

[Aside.]

So, now the tempest tears him up by the roots,
And on the ground extends the noble ruin.

[ANTONY having thrown himself down.]
Lie there, thou shadow of an emperor;
The place thou presest on thy mother earth
Is all thy empire now: now it contains thee;
Some few days hence, and then 'twill be too large,
When thou'rt contracted in thy narrow urn,
Shrunk to a few ashes; then Octavia
(For Cleopatra will not live to see it),
Octavia then will have thee all her own,
And bear thee in her widowed hand to Caesar;
Caesar will weep, the crocodile will weep,
To see his rival of the universe
Lie still and peaceful there. I'll think no more on't.

ANTONY. Give me some music, look that it be sad.
I'll soothe my melancholy, till I swell,
And burst myself with sighing.--

[Soft music.]

'Tis somewhat to my humour; stay, I fancy
I'm now turned wild, a commoner of nature;
Of all forsaken, and forsaking all;
Live in a shady forest's sylvan scene,
Stretched at my length beneath some blasted oak,
I lean my head upon the mossy bark,
And look just of a piece as I grew from it;
My uncombed locks, matted like mistletoe,
Hang o'er my hoary face; a murmur'ring brook
Runs at my foot.

VENTIDIUS. Methinks I fancy
Myself there too.

ANTONY. The herd come jumping by me,
And fearless, quench their thirst, while I look on,
And take me for their fellow-citizen.
More of this image, more; it lulls my thoughts.

[Soft music again.]

VENTIDIUS. I must disturb him; I can hold no longer.
[Stands before him.]

ANTONY. [starting up]. Art thou Ventidius?

VENTIDIUS. Are you Antony?
I'm liker what I was, than you to him
I left you last.

ANTONY. I'm angry.

VENTIDIUS. So am I.

ANTONY. I would be private: leave me.

VENTIDIUS. Sir, I love you,
And therefore will not leave you.

ANTONY. Will not leave me!
Where have you learnt that answer? Who am I?

VENTIDIUS. My emperor; the man I love next Heaven:
If I said more, I think 'twere scare a sin:
You're all that's good, and god-like.

ANTONY. All that's wretched.
You will not leave me then?

VENTIDIUS. 'Twas too presuming
To say I would not; but I dare not leave you:
And, 'tis unkind in you to chide me hence
So soon, when I so far have come to see you.

ANTONY. Now thou hast seen me, art thou satisfied?
For, if a friend, thou hast beheld enough;
And, if a foe, too much.

VENTIDIUS. Look, emperor, this is no common dew.
[Weeping.]
I have not wept this forty years; but now
My mother comes afresh into my eyes;
I cannot help her softness.

ANTONY. By heavens, he weeps! poor good old man, he weeps!
The big round drops course one another down
The furrows of his cheeks.--Stop them, Ventidius,
Or I shall blush to death, they set my shame,
That caused them, full before me.

VENTIDIUS. I'll do my best.

ANTONY. Sure there's contagion in the tears of friends:
See, I have caught it too. Believe me, 'tis not
For my own griefs, but thine.--Nay, father!

VENTIDIUS. Emperor.

ANTONY. Emperor! Why, that's the style of victory;
The conqu'ring soldier, red with unfelt wounds,
Salutes his general so; but never more
Shall that sound reach my ears.

VENTIDIUS. I warrant you.

ANTONY. Actium, Actium! Oh!--

VENTIDIUS. It sits too near you.

ANTONY. Here, here it lies a lump of lead by day,
And, in my short, distracted, nightly slumbers,
The hag that rides my dreams.--

VENTIDIUS. Out with it; give it vent.

ANTONY. Urge not my shame.
I lost a battle,--

VENTIDIUS. So has Julius done.

ANTONY. Thou favour'st me, and speak'st not half thou think'st;
For Julius fought it out, and lost it fairly.
But Antony--

VENTIDIUS. Nay, stop not.

ANTONY. Antony--
Well, thou wilt have it,--like a coward, fled,
Fled while his soldiers fought; fled first, Ventidius.
Thou long'st to curse me, and I give thee leave.
I know thou cam'st prepared to rail.

VENTIDIUS. I did.

ANTONY. I'll help thee.--I have been a man, Ventidius.

VENTIDIUS. Yes, and a brave one! but--

ANTONY. I know thy meaning.

But I have lost my reason, have disgraced
The name of soldier, with inglorious ease.
In the full vintage of my flowing honours,
Sat still, and saw it prest by other hands.
Fortune came smiling to my youth, and wooed it,
And purple greatness met my ripened years.
When first I came to empire, I was borne
On tides of people, crowding to my triumphs;
The wish of nations, and the willing world
Received me as its pledge of future peace;
I was so great, so happy, so beloved,
Fate could not ruin me; till I took pains,
And worked against my fortune, child her from me,
And returned her loose; yet still she came again.
My careless days, and my luxurious nights,
At length have wearied her, and now she's gone,
Gone, gone, divorced for ever. Help me, soldier,
To curse this madman, this industrious fool,
Who laboured to be wretched: Pr'ythee, curse me.

VENTIDIUS. No.

ANTONY. Why?

VENTIDIUS. You are too sensible already
Of what you've done, too conscious of your failings;
And, like a scorpion, whipt by others first
To fury, sting yourself in mad revenge.
I would bring balm, and pour it in your wounds,
Cure your distempered mind, and heal your fortunes.

ANTONY. I know thou would'st.

VENTIDIUS. I will.

ANTONY. Ha, ha, ha, ha!

VENTIDIUS. You laugh.

ANTONY. I do, to see officious love.
Give cordials to the dead.

VENTIDIUS. You would be lost, then?

ANTONY. I am.

VENTIDIUS. I say you are not. Try your fortune.

ANTONY. I have, to the utmost. Dost thou think me desperate,
Without just cause? No, when I found all lost
Beyond repair, I hid me from the world,
And learnt to scorn it here; which now I do
So heartily, I think it is not worth
The cost of keeping.

VENTIDIUS. Caesar thinks not so;
He'll thank you for the gift he could not take.
You would be killed like Tully, would you? do,
Hold out your throat to Caesar, and die tamely.

ANTONY. No, I can kill myself; and so resolve.

VENTIDIUS. I can die with you too, when time shall serve;
But fortune calls upon us now to live,
To fight, to conquer.

ANTONY. Sure thou dream'st, Ventidius.

VENTIDIUS. No; 'tis you dream; you sleep away your hours
In desperate sloth, miscalled philosophy.
Up, up, for honour's sake; twelve legions wait you,
And long to call you chief: By painful journeys
I led them, patient both of heat and hunger,
Down form the Parthian marches to the Nile.
'Twill do you good to see their sunburnt faces,
Their scarred cheeks, and chopt hands: there's virtue in them.
They'll sell those mangled limbs at dearer rates
Than yon trim bands can buy.

ANTONY. Where left you them?

VENTIDIUS. I said in Lower Syria.

ANTONY. Bring them hither;
There may be life in these.

VENTIDIUS. They will not come.

ANTONY. Why didst thou mock my hopes with promised aids,
To double my despair? They're mutinous.

VENTIDIUS. Most firm and loyal.

ANTONY. Yet they will not march
To succour me. O trifler!

VENTIDIUS. They petition
You would make haste to head them.

ANTONY. I'm besieged.

VENTIDIUS. There's but one way shut up: How came I hither?

ANTONY. I will not stir.

VENTIDIUS. They would perhaps desire
A better reason.

ANTONY. I have never used
My soldiers to demand a reason of
My actions. Why did they refuse to march?

VENTIDIUS. They said they would not fight for Cleopatra.

ANTONY. What was't they said?

VENTIDIUS. They said they would not fight for Cleopatra.
Why should they fight indeed, to make her conquer,
And make you more a slave? to gain you kingdoms,
Which, for a kiss, at your next midnight feast,
You'll sell to her? Then she new-names her jewels,
And calls this diamond such or such a tax;
Each pendant in her ear shall be a province.

ANTONY. Ventidius, I allow your tongue free licence
On all my other faults; but, on your life,
No word of Cleopatra: she deserves
More worlds than I can lose.

VENTIDIUS. Behold, you Powers,
To whom you have intrusted humankind!
See Europe, Afric, Asia, put in balance,
And all weighed down by one light, worthless woman!
I think the gods are Antonies, and give,
Like prodigals, this nether world away
To none but wasteful hands.

ANTONY. You grow presumptuous.

VENTIDIUS. I take the privilege of plain love to speak.

ANTONY. Plain love! plain arrogance, plain insolence!
Thy men are cowards; thou, an envious traitor;
Who, under seeming honesty, hast vented
The burden of thy rank, o'erflowing gall.
O that thou wert my equal; great in arms
As the first Caesar was, that I might kill thee
Without a stain to honour!

VENTIDIUS. You may kill me;
You have done more already,--called me traitor.

ANTONY. Art thou not one?

VENTIDIUS. For showing you yourself,
Which none else durst have done? but had I been
That name, which I disdain to speak again,
I needed not have sought your abject fortunes,
Come to partake your fate, to die with you.
What hindered me to have led my conquering eagles
To fill Octavius' bands? I could have been
A traitor then, a glorious, happy traitor,
And not have been so called.

ANTONY. Forgive me, soldier;
I've been too passionate.

VENTIDIUS. You thought me false;
Thought my old age betrayed you: Kill me, sir,
Pray, kill me; yet you need not, your unkindness
Has left your sword no work.

ANTONY. I did not think so;
I said it in my rage: Pr'ythee, forgive me.
Why didst thou tempt my anger, by discovery
Of what I would not hear?

VENTIDIUS. No prince but you
Could merit that sincerity I used,
Nor durst another man have ventured it;
But you, ere love misled your wandering eyes,
Were sure the chief and best of human race,
Framed in the very pride and boast of nature;
So perfect, that the gods, who formed you, wondered
At their own skill, and cried--A lucky hit
Has mended our design. Their envy hindered,
Else you had been immortal, and a pattern,
When Heaven would work for ostentation's sake
To copy out again.

ANTONY. But Cleopatra--
Go on; for I can bear it now.

VENTIDIUS. No more.

ANTONY. Thou dar'st not trust my passion, but thou may'st;
Thou only lov'st, the rest have flattered me.

VENTIDIUS. Heaven's blessing on your heart for that kind word!
May I believe you love me? Speak again.

ANTONY. Indeed I do. Speak this, and this, and this.

[Hugging him.]

Thy praises were unjust; but, I'll deserve them,
And yet mend all. Do with me what thou wilt;
Lead me to victory! thou know'st the way.

VENTIDIUS. And, will you leave this--

ANTONY. Pr'ythee, do not curse her,
And I will leave her; though, Heaven knows, I love
Beyond life, conquest, empire, all, but honour;
But I will leave her.

VENTIDIUS. That's my royal master;
And, shall we fight?

ANTONY. I warrant thee, old soldier.
Thou shalt behold me once again in iron;
And at the head of our old troops, that beat
The Parthians, cry aloud--Come, follow me!

VENTIDIUS. Oh, now I hear my emperor! in that word
Octavius fell. Gods, let me see that day,
And, if I have ten years behind, take all:
I'll thank you for the exchange.

ANTONY. O Cleopatra!

VENTIDIUS. Again?

ANTONY. I've done: In that last sigh she went.
Caesar shall know what 'tis to force a lover
From all he holds most dear.

VENTIDIUS. Methinks, you breathe
Another soul: Your looks are more divine;
You speak a hero, and you move a god.

ANTONY. Oh, thou hast fired me; my soul's up in arms,
And mans each part about me: Once again,
That noble eagerness of fight has seized me;
That eagerness with which I darted upward
To Cassius' camp: In vain the steepy hill
Opposed my way; in vain a war of spears
Sung round my head, and planted on my shield;
I won the trenches, while my foremost men
Lagged on the plain below.

VENTIDIUS. Ye gods, ye gods,
For such another honour!

ANTONY. Come on, my soldier!
Our hearts and arms are still the same: I long
Once more to meet our foes; that thou and I,
Like Time and Death, marching before our troops,
May taste fate to them; mow them out a passage,
And, entering where the foremost squadrons yield,
Begin the noble harvest of the field.

[Exeunt.]

Act II

Scene I

Enter CLEOPATRA, IRAS, and ALEXAS

CLEOPATRA. What shall I do, or whither shall I turn?
Ventidius has o'ercome, and he will go.

ALEXAS. He goes to fight for you.

CLEOPATRA. Then he would see me, ere he went to fight:
Flatter me not: If once he goes, he's lost,
And all my hopes destroyed.

ALEXAS. Does this weak passion
Become a mighty queen?

CLEOPATRA. I am no queen:
Is this to be a queen, to be besieged
By yon insulting Roman, and to wait
Each hour the victor's chain? These ills are small:
For Antony is lost, and I can mourn
For nothing else but him. Now come, Octavius,
I have no more to lose! prepare thy bands;

I'm fit to be a captive: Antony
Has taught my mind the fortune of a slave.

IRAS. Call reason to assist you.

CLEOPATRA. I have none,
And none would have: My love's a noble madness,
Which shows the cause deserved it. Moderate sorrow
Fits vulgar love, and for a vulgar man:
But I have loved with such transcendent passion,
I soared, at first, quite out of reason's view,
And now am lost above it. No, I'm proud
'Tis thus: Would Antony could see me now
Think you he would not sigh, though he must leave me?
Sure he would sigh; for he is noble-natured,
And bears a tender heart: I know him well.
Ah, no, I know him not; I knew him once,
But now 'tis past.

IRAS. Let it be past with you:
Forget him, madam.

CLEOPATRA. Never, never, Iras.
He once was mine; and once, though now 'tis gone,
Leaves a faint image of possession still.

ALEXAS. Think him inconstant, cruel, and ungrateful.

CLEOPATRA. I cannot: If I could, those thoughts were vain.
Faithless, ungrateful, cruel, though he be,
I still must love him.

Enter CHARMION

Now, what news, my Charmion?
Will he be kind? and will he not forsake me?
Am I to live, or die?--nay, do I live?
Or am I dead? for when he gave his answer,
Fate took the word, and then I lived or died.

CHARMION. I found him, madam--

CLEOPATRA. A long speech preparing?
If thou bring'st comfort, haste, and give it me,
For never was more need.

IRAS. I know he loves you.

CLEOPATRA. Had he been kind, her eyes had told me so,

Before her tongue could speak it: Now she studies,
To soften what he said; but give me death,
Just as he sent it, Charmion, undisguised,
And in the words he spoke.

CHARMION. I found him, then,
Encompassed round, I think, with iron statues;
So mute, so motionless his soldiers stood,
While awfully he cast his eyes about,
And every leader's hopes or fears surveyed:
Methought he looked resolved, and yet not pleased.
When he beheld me struggling in the crowd,
He blushed, and bade make way.

ALEXAS. There's comfort yet.

CHARMION. Ventidius fixed his eyes upon my passage
Severely, as he meant to frown me back,
And sullenly gave place: I told my message,
Just as you gave it, broken and disordered;
I numbered in it all your sighs and tears,
And while I moved your pitiful request,
That you but only begged a last farewell,
He fetched an inward groan; and every time
I named you, sighed, as if his heart were breaking,
But, shunned my eyes, and guiltily looked down:
He seemed not now that awful Antony,
Who shook and armed assembly with his nod;
But, making show as he would rub his eyes,
Disguised and blotted out a falling tear.

CLEOPATRA. Did he then weep? And was I worth a tear?
If what thou hast to say be not as pleasing,
Tell me no more, but let me die contented.

CHARMION. He bid me say,--He knew himself so well,
He could deny you nothing, if he saw you;
And therefore--

CLEOPATRA. Thou wouldst say, he would not see me?

CHARMION. And therefore begged you not to use a power,
Which he could ill resist; yet he should ever
Respect you, as he ought.

CLEOPATRA. Is that a word
For Antony to use to Cleopatra?
O that faint word, RESPECT! how I disdain it!
Disdain myself, for loving after it!

He should have kept that word for cold Octavia.
Respect is for a wife: Am I that thing,
That dull, insipid lump, without desires,
And without power to give them?

ALEXAS. You misjudge;
You see through love, and that deludes your sight;
As, what is straight, seems crooked through the water:
But I, who bear my reason undisturbed,
Can see this Antony, this dreaded man,
A fearful slave, who fain would run away,
And shuns his master's eyes: If you pursue him,
My life on't, he still drags a chain along.
That needs must clog his flight.

CLEOPATRA. Could I believe thee!--

ALEXAS. By every circumstance I know he loves.
True, he's hard prest, by interest and by honour;
Yet he but doubts, and parleys, and casts out
Many a long look for succour.

CLEOPATRA. He sends word,
He fears to see my face.

ALEXAS. And would you more?
He shows his weakness who declines the combat,
And you must urge your fortune. Could he speak
More plainly? To my ears, the message sounds--
Come to my rescue, Cleopatra, come;
Come, free me from Ventidius; from my tyrant:
See me, and give me a pretence to leave him!--
I hear his trumpets. This way he must pass.
Please you, retire a while; I'll work him first,
That he may bend more easy.

CLEOPATRA. You shall rule me;
But all, I fear, in vain.

[Exit with CHARMION and IRAS.]

ALEXAS. I fear so too;
Though I concealed my thoughts, to make her bold;
But 'tis our utmost means, and fate befriend it!

[Withdraws.]

Enter Lictors with Fasces; one bearing the Eagle; then enter
ANTONY with VENTIDIUS, followed by other Commanders

ANTONY. Octavius is the minion of blind chance,

But holds from virtue nothing.

VENTIDIUS. Has he courage?

ANTONY. But just enough to season him from coward.
Oh, 'tis the coldest youth upon a charge,
The most deliberate fighter! if he ventures
(As in Illyria once, they say, he did,
To storm a town), 'tis when he cannot choose;
When all the world have fixt their eyes upon him;
And then he lives on that for seven years after;
But, at a close revenge he never fails.

VENTIDIUS. I heard you challenged him.

ANTONY. I did, Ventidius.
What think'st thou was his answer? 'Twas so tame!--
He said, he had more ways than one to die;
I had not.

VENTIDIUS. Poor!

ANTONY. He has more ways than one;
But he would choose them all before that one.

VENTIDIUS. He first would choose an ague, or a fever.

ANTONY. No; it must be an ague, not a fever;
He has not warmth enough to die by that.

VENTIDIUS. Or old age and a bed.

ANTONY. Ay, there's his choice,
He would live, like a lamp, to the last wink,
And crawl the utmost verge of life.
O Hercules! Why should a man like this,
Who dares not trust his fate for one great action,
Be all the care of Heaven? Why should he lord it
O'er fourscore thousand men, of whom each one
Is braver than himself?

VENTIDIUS. You conquered for him:
Philippi knows it; there you shared with him
That empire, which your sword made all your own.

ANTONY. Fool that I was, upon my eagle's wings
I bore this wren, till I was tired with soaring,
And now he mounts above me.
Good heavens, is this,—is this the man who braves me?

Who bids my age make way? Drives me before him,
To the world's ridge, and sweeps me off like rubbish?

VENTIDIUS. Sir, we lose time; the troops are mounted all.

ANTONY. Then give the word to march:
I long to leave this prison of a town,
To join thy legions; and, in open field,
Once more to show my face. Lead, my deliverer.

Enter ALEXAS

ALEXAS. Great emperor,
In mighty arms renowned above mankind,
But, in soft pity to the opprest, a god;
This message sends the mournful Cleopatra
To her departing lord.

VENTIDIUS. Smooth sycophant!

ALEXAS. A thousand wishes, and ten thousand prayers,
Millions of blessings wait you to the wars;
Millions of sighs and tears she sends you too,
And would have sent
As many dear embraces to your arms,
As many parting kisses to your lips;
But those, she fears, have wearied you already.

VENTIDIUS. [aside.] False crocodile!

ALEXAS. And yet she begs not now, you would not leave her;
That were a wish too mighty for her hopes,
Too presuming
For her low fortune, and your ebbing love;
That were a wish for her more prosperous days,
Her blooming beauty, and your growing kindness.

ANTONY. [aside.] Well, I must man it out:--What would the queen?

ALEXAS. First, to these noble warriors, who attend
Your daring courage in the chase of fame,--
Too daring, and too dangerous for her quiet,--
She humbly recommends all she holds dear,
All her own cares and fears,--the care of you.

VENTIDIUS. Yes, witness Actium.

ANTONY. Let him speak, Ventidius.

ALEXAS. You, when his matchless valour bears him forward,
With ardour too heroic, on his foes,
Fall down, as she would do, before his feet;
Lie in his way, and stop the paths of death:
Tell him, this god is not invulnerable;
That absent Cleopatra bleeds in him;
And, that you may remember her petition,
She begs you wear these trifles, as a pawn,
Which, at your wished return, she will redeem

[Gives jewels to the Commanders.]

With all the wealth of Egypt:
This to the great Ventidius she presents,
Whom she can never count her enemy,
Because he loves her lord.

VENTIDIUS. Tell her, I'll none on't;
I'm not ashamed of honest poverty;
Not all the diamonds of the east can bribe
Ventidius from his faith. I hope to see
These and the rest of all her sparkling store,
Where they shall more deservedly be placed.

ANTONY. And who must wear them then?

VENTIDIUS. The wronged Octavia.

ANTONY. You might have spared that word.

VENTIDIUS. And he that bribe.

ANTONY. But have I no remembrance?

ALEXAS. Yes, a dear one;
Your slave the queen--

ANTONY. My mistress.

ALEXAS. Then your mistress;
Your mistress would, she says, have sent her soul,
But that you had long since; she humbly begs
This ruby bracelet, set with bleeding hearts,
The emblems of her own, may bind your arm.

[Presenting a bracelet.]

VENTIDIUS. Now, my best lord,--in honour's name, I ask you,
For manhood's sake, and for your own dear safety,--
Touch not these poisoned gifts,
Infected by the sender; touch them not;
Myriads of bluest plagues lie underneath them,

And more than aconite has dipt the silk.

ANTONY. Nay, now you grow too cynical, Ventidius:
A lady's favours may be worn with honour.
What, to refuse her bracelet! On my soul,
When I lie pensive in my tent alone,
'Twill pass the wakeful hours of winter nights,
To tell these pretty beads upon my arm,
To count for every one a soft embrace,
A melting kiss at such and such a time:
And now and then the fury of her love,
When----And what harm's in this?

ALEXAS. None, none, my lord,
But what's to her, that now 'tis past for ever.

ANTONY. [going to tie it.]
We soldiers are so awkward--help me tie it.

ALEXAS. In faith, my lord, we courtiers too are awkward
In these affairs: so are all men indeed:
Even I, who am not one. But shall I speak?

ANTONY. Yes, freely.

ALEXAS. Then, my lord, fair hands alone
Are fit to tie it; she, who sent it can.

VENTIDIUS. Hell, death! this eunuch pander ruins you.
You will not see her?

[ALEXAS whispers an ATTENDANT, who goes out.]

ANTONY. But to take my leave.

VENTIDIUS. Then I have washed an Aethiop. You're undone;
Y' are in the toils; y' are taken; y' are destroyed:
Her eyes do Caesar's work.

ANTONY. You fear too soon.
I'm constant to myself: I know my strength;
And yet she shall not think me barbarous neither,
Born in the depths of Afric: I am a Roman,
Bred in the rules of soft humanity.
A guest, and kindly used, should bid farewell.

VENTIDIUS. You do not know
How weak you are to her, how much an infant:
You are not proof against a smile, or glance:

A sigh will quite disarm you.

ANTONY. See, she comes!
Now you shall find your error.--Gods, I thank you:
I formed the danger greater than it was,
And now 'tis near, 'tis lessened.

VENTIDIUS. Mark the end yet.

Enter CLEOPATRA, CHARMION, and IRAS

ANTONY. Well, madam, we are met.

CLEOPATRA. Is this a meeting?
Then, we must part?

ANTONY. We must.

CLEOPATRA. Who says we must?

ANTONY. Our own hard fates.

CLEOPATRA. We make those fates ourselves.

ANTONY. Yes, we have made them; we have loved each other,
Into our mutual ruin.

CLEOPATRA. The gods have seen my joys with envious eyes;
I have no friends in heaven; and all the world,
As 'twere the business of mankind to part us,
Is armed against my love: even you yourself
Join with the rest; you, you are armed against me.

ANTONY. I will be justified in all I do
To late posterity, and therefore hear me.
If I mix a lie
With any truth, reproach me freely with it;
Else, favour me with silence.

CLEOPATRA. You command me,
And I am dumb.

VENTIDIUS. I like this well; he shows authority.

ANTONY. That I derive my ruin
From you alone----

CLEOPATRA. O heavens! I ruin you!

ANTONY. You promised me your silence, and you break it
Ere I have scarce begun.

CLEOPATRA. Well, I obey you.

ANTONY. When I beheld you first, it was in Egypt.
Ere Caesar saw your eyes, you gave me love,
And were too young to know it; that I settled
Your father in his throne, was for your sake;
I left the acknowledgment for time to ripen.
Caesar stept in, and, with a greedy hand,
Plucked the green fruit, ere the first blush of red,
Yet cleaving to the bough. He was my lord,
And was, beside, too great for me to rival;
But, I deserved you first, though he enjoyed you.
When, after, I beheld you in Cilicia,
An enemy to Rome, I pardoned you.

CLEOPATRA. I cleared myself----

ANTONY. Again you break your promise.
I loved you still, and took your weak excuses,
Took you into my bosom, stained by Caesar,
And not half mine: I went to Egypt with you,
And hid me from the business of the world,
Shut out inquiring nations from my sight,
To give whole years to you.

VENTIDIUS. Yes, to your shame be't spoken.
[Aside.]

ANTONY. How I loved.
Witness, ye days and nights, and all ye hours,
That danced away with down upon your feet,
As all your business were to count my passion!
One day passed by, and nothing saw but love;
Another came, and still 'twas only love:
The suns were wearied out with looking on,
And I untired with loving.
I saw you every day, and all the day;
And every day was still but as the first,
So eager was I still to see you more.

VENTIDIUS. 'Tis all too true.

ANTONY. Fulvia, my wife, grew jealous,
(As she indeed had reason) raised a war
In Italy, to call me back.

VENTIDIUS. But yet
You went not.

ANTONY. While within your arms I lay,
The world fell mouldering from my hands each hour,
And left me scarce a grasp--I thank your love for't.

VENTIDIUS. Well pushed: that last was home.

CLEOPATRA. Yet may I speak?

ANTONY. If I have urged a falsehood, yes; else, not.
Your silence says, I have not. Fulvia died,
(Pardon, you gods, with my unkindness died);
To set the world at peace, I took Octavia,
This Caesar's sister; in her pride of youth,
And flower of beauty, did I wed that lady,
Whom blushing I must praise, because I left her.
You called; my love obeyed the fatal summons:
This raised the Roman arms; the cause was yours.
I would have fought by land, where I was stronger;
You hindered it: yet, when I fought at sea,
Forsook me fighting; and (O stain to honour!
O lasting shame!) I knew not that I fled;
But fled to follow you.

VENTIDIUS. What haste she made to hoist her purple sails!
And, to appear magnificent in flight,
Drew half our strength away.

ANTONY. All this you caused.
And, would you multiply more ruins on me?
This honest man, my best, my only friend,
Has gathered up the shipwreck of my fortunes;
Twelve legions I have left, my last recruits.
And you have watched the news, and bring your eyes
To seize them too. If you have aught to answer,
Now speak, you have free leave.

ALEXAS. [aside.] She stands confounded:
Despair is in her eyes.

VENTIDIUS. Now lay a sigh in the way to stop his passage:
Prepare a tear, and bid it for his legions;
'Tis like they shall be sold.

CLEOPATRA. How shall I plead my cause, when you, my judge,
Already have condemned me? Shall I bring
The love you bore me for my advocate?

That now is turned against me, that destroys me;
For love, once past, is, at the best, forgotten;
But oftener sours to hate: 'twill please my lord
To ruin me, and therefore I'll be guilty.
But, could I once have thought it would have pleased you,
That you would pry, with narrow searching eyes,
Into my faults, severe to my destruction,
And watching all advantages with care,
That serve to make me wretched? Speak, my lord,
For I end here. Though I deserved this usage,
Was it like you to give it?

ANTONY. Oh, you wrong me,
To think I sought this parting, or desired
To accuse you more than what will clear myself,
And justify this breach.

CLEOPATRA. Thus low I thank you;
And, since my innocence will not offend,
I shall not blush to own it.

VENTIDIUS. After this,
I think she'll blush at nothing.

CLEOPATRA. You seem grieved
(And therein you are kind) that Caesar first
Enjoyed my love, though you deserved it better:
I grieve for that, my lord, much more than you;
For, had I first been yours, it would have saved
My second choice: I never had been his,
And ne'er had been but yours. But Caesar first,
You say, possessed my love. Not so, my lord:
He first possessed my person; you, my love:
Caesar loved me; but I loved Antony.
If I endured him after, 'twas because
I judged it due to the first name of men;
And, half constrained, I gave, as to a tyrant,
What he would take by force.

VENTIDIUS. O Syren! Syren!
Yet grant that all the love she boasts were true,
Has she not ruined you? I still urge that,
The fatal consequence.

CLEOPATRA. The consequence indeed--
For I dare challenge him, my greatest foe,
To say it was designed: 'tis true, I loved you,
And kept you far from an uneasy wife,--
Such Fulvia was.

Yes, but he'll say, you left Octavia for me;--
And, can you blame me to receive that love,
Which quitted such desert, for worthless me?
How often have I wished some other Caesar,
Great as the first, and as the second young,
Would court my love, to be refused for you!

VENTIDIUS. Words, words; but Actium, sir; remember Actium.

CLEOPATRA. Even there, I dare his malice. True, I counselled
To fight at sea; but I betrayed you not.
I fled, but not to the enemy. 'Twas fear;
Would I had been a man, not to have feared!
For none would then have envied me your friendship,
Who envy me your love.

ANTONY. We are both unhappy:
If nothing else, yet our ill fortune parts us.
Speak; would you have me perish by my stay?

CLEOPATRA. If, as a friend, you ask my judgment, go;
If, as a lover, stay. If you must perish--
'Tis a hard word--but stay.

VENTIDIUS. See now the effects of her so boasted love!
She strives to drag you down to ruin with her;
But, could she 'scape without you, oh, how soon
Would she let go her hold, and haste to shore,
And never look behind!

CLEOPATRA. Then judge my love by this.
[Giving ANTONY a writing.]
Could I have borne
A life or death, a happiness or woe,
From yours divided, this had given me means.

ANTONY. By Hercules, the writing of Octavius!
I know it well: 'tis that proscribing hand,
Young as it was, that led the way to mine,
And left me but the second place in murder.--
See, see, Ventidius! here he offers Egypt,
And joins all Syria to it, as a present;
So, in requital, she forsake my fortunes,
And join her arms with his.

CLEOPATRA. And yet you leave me!
You leave me, Antony; and yet I love you,
Indeed I do: I have refused a kingdom;
That is a trifle;

For I could part with life, with anything,
But only you. Oh, let me die but with you!
Is that a hard request?

ANTONY. Next living with you,
'Tis all that Heaven can give.

ALEXAS. He melts; we conquer.
[Aside.]

CLEOPATRA. No; you shall go: your interest calls you hence;
Yes; your dear interest pulls too strong, for these
Weak arms to hold you here.

[Takes his hand.]
Go; leave me, soldier
(For you're no more a lover): leave me dying:
Push me, all pale and panting, from your bosom,
And, when your march begins, let one run after,
Breathless almost for joy, and cry--She's dead.
The soldiers shout; you then, perhaps, may sigh,
And muster all your Roman gravity:
Ventidius chides; and straight your brow clears up,
As I had never been.

ANTONY. Gods, 'tis too much; too much for man to bear.

CLEOPATRA. What is't for me then,
A weak, forsaken woman, and a lover?--
Here let me breathe my last: envy me not
This minute in your arms: I'll die apace,
As fast as e'er I can, and end your trouble.

ANTONY. Die! rather let me perish; loosened nature
Leap from its hinges, sink the props of heaven,
And fall the skies, to crush the nether world!
My eyes, my soul, my all!

[Embraces her.]

VENTIDIUS. And what's this toy,
In balance with your fortune, honour, fame?

ANTONY. What is't, Ventidius?--it outweighs them all;
Why, we have more than conquered Caesar now:
My queen's not only innocent, but loves me.
This, this is she, who drags me down to ruin!
"But, could she 'scape without me, with what haste
Would she let slip her hold, and make to shore,
And never look behind!"
Down on thy knees, blasphemer as thou art,

And ask forgiveness of wronged innocence.

VENTIDIUS. I'll rather die, than take it. Will you go?

ANTONY. Go! whither? Go from all that's excellent?
Faith, honour, virtue, all good things forbid,
That I should go from her, who sets my love
Above the price of kingdoms! Give, you gods,
Give to your boy, your Caesar,
This rattle of a globe to play withal,
This gewgaw world, and put him cheaply off:
I'll not be pleased with less than Cleopatra.

CLEOPATRA. She's wholly yours. My heart's so full of joy,
That I shall do some wild extravagance
Of love, in public; and the foolish world,
Which knows not tenderness, will think me mad.

VENTIDIUS. O women! women! women! all the gods
Have not such power of doing good to man,
As you of doing harm.

[Exit.]

ANTONY. Our men are armed:--
Unbar the gate that looks to Caesar's camp:
I would revenge the treachery he meant me;
And long security makes conquest easy.
I'm eager to return before I go;
For, all the pleasures I have known beat thick
On my remembrance.--How I long for night!
That both the sweets of mutual love may try,
And triumph once o'er Caesar ere we die.

[Exeunt.]

Act III

Scene I

At one door enter CLEOPATRA, CHARMION, IRAS, and ALEXAS,
a Train of EGYPTIANS: at the other ANTONY and ROMANS.
The entrance on both sides is prepared by music; the
trumpets first sounding on Antony's part: then answered
by timbrels, etc., on CLEOPATRA'S. CHARMION and IRAS
hold a laurel wreath betwixt them. A Dance of EGYPTIANS.
After the ceremony, CLEOPATRA crowns ANTONY.

ANTONY. I thought how those white arms would fold me in,

And strain me close, and melt me into love;
So pleased with that sweet image, I sprung forwards,
And added all my strength to every blow.

CLEOPATRA. Come to me, come, my soldier, to my arms!
You've been too long away from my embraces;
But, when I have you fast, and all my own,
With broken murmurs, and with amorous sighs,
I'll say, you were unkind, and punish you,
And mark you red with many an eager kiss.

ANTONY. My brighter Venus!

CLEOPATRA. O my greater Mars!

ANTONY. Thou join'st us well, my love!
Suppose me come from the Phlegraean plains,
Where gasping giants lay, cleft by my sword,
And mountain-tops paired off each other blow,
To bury those I slew. Receive me, goddess!
Let Caesar spread his subtle nets; like Vulcan,
In thy embraces I would be beheld
By heaven and earth at once;
And make their envy what they meant their sport
Let those, who took us, blush; I would love on,
With awful state, regardless of their frowns,
As their superior gods.
There's no satiety of love in thee:
Enjoyed, thou still art new; perpetual spring
Is in thy arms; the ripened fruit but falls,
And blossoms rise to fill its empty place;
And I grow rich by giving.

Enter VENTIDIUS, and stands apart

ALEXAS. Oh, now the danger's past, your general comes!
He joins not in your joys, nor minds your triumphs;
But, with contracted brows, looks frowning on,
As envying your success.

ANTONY. Now, on my soul, he loves me; truly loves me:
He never flattered me in any vice,
But awes me with his virtue: even this minute,
Methinks, he has a right of chiding me.
Lead to the temple: I'll avoid his presence;
It checks too strong upon me.

[Exeunt the rest.]

[As ANTONY is going, VENTIDIUS pulls him by the robe.]

VENTIDIUS. Emperor!

ANTONY. 'Tis the old argument; I pr'ythee, spare me.
[Looking back.]

VENTIDIUS. But this one hearing, emperor.

ANTONY. Let go
My robe; or, by my father Hercules--

VENTIDIUS. By Hercules' father, that's yet greater,
I bring you somewhat you would wish to know.

ANTONY. Thou see'st we are observed; attend me here,
And I'll return.

[Exit.]

VENTIDIUS. I am waning in his favour, yet I love him;
I love this man, who runs to meet his ruin;
And sure the gods, like me, are fond of him:
His virtues lie so mingled with his crimes,
As would confound their choice to punish one,
And not reward the other.

Enter ANTONY

ANTONY. We can conquer,
You see, without your aid.
We have dislodged their troops;
They look on us at distance, and, like curs
Scaped from the lion's paws, they bay far off,
And lick their wounds, and faintly threaten war.
Five thousand Romans, with their faces upward,
Lie breathless on the plain.

VENTIDIUS. 'Tis well; and he,
Who lost them, could have spared ten thousand more.
Yet if, by this advantage, you could gain
An easier peace, while Caesar doubts the chance
Of arms--

ANTONY. Oh, think not on't, Ventidius!
The boy pursues my ruin, he'll no peace;
His malice is considerable in advantage.
Oh, he's the coolest murderer! so staunch,
He kills, and keeps his temper.

VENTIDIUS. Have you no friend
In all his army, who has power to move him?

Maecenas, or Agrippa, might do much.

ANTONY. They're both too deep in Caesar's interests.
We'll work it out by dint of sword, or perish.

VENTIDIUS. Fain I would find some other.

ANTONY. Thank thy love.
Some four or five such victories as this
Will save thy further pains.

VENTIDIUS. Expect no more; Caesar is on his guard:
I know, sir, you have conquered against odds;
But still you draw supplies from one poor town,
And of Egyptians: he has all the world,
And, at his beck, nations come pouring in,
To fill the gaps you make. Pray, think again.

ANTONY. Why dost thou drive me from myself, to search
For foreign aids?--to hunt my memory,
And range all o'er a waste and barren place,
To find a friend? The wretched have no friends.
Yet I had one, the bravest youth of Rome,
Whom Caesar loves beyond the love of women:
He could resolve his mind, as fire does wax,
From that hard rugged image melt him down,
And mould him in what softer form he pleased.

VENTIDIUS. Him would I see; that man, of all the world;
Just such a one we want.

ANTONY. He loved me too;
I was his soul; he lived not but in me:
We were so closed within each other's breasts,
The rivets were not found, that joined us first.
That does not reach us yet: we were so mixt,
As meeting streams, both to ourselves were lost;
We were one mass; we could not give or take,
But from the same; for he was I, I he.

VENTIDIUS. He moves as I would wish him.
[Aside.]

ANTONY. After this,
I need not tell his name;--'twas Dolabella.

VENTIDIUS. He's now in Caesar's camp.

ANTONY. No matter where,

Since he's no longer mine. He took unkindly,
That I forbade him Cleopatra's sight,
Because I feared he loved her: he confessed,
He had a warmth, which, for my sake, he stifled;
For 'twere impossible that two, so one,
Should not have loved the same. When he departed,
He took no leave; and that confirmed my thoughts.

VENTIDIUS. It argues, that he loved you more than her,
Else he had stayed; but he perceived you jealous,
And would not grieve his friend: I know he loves you.

ANTONY. I should have seen him, then, ere now.

VENTIDIUS. Perhaps
He has thus long been labouring for your peace.

ANTONY. Would he were here!

VENTIDIUS. Would you believe he loved you?
I read your answer in your eyes, you would.
Not to conceal it longer, he has sent
A messenger from Caesar's camp, with letters.

ANTONY. Let him appear.

VENTIDIUS. I'll bring him instantly.
[Exit VENTIDIUS, and re-enters immediately with DOLABELLA.]

ANTONY. 'Tis he himself! himself, by holy friendship!
[Runs to embrace him.]
Art thou returned at last, my better half?
Come, give me all myself!
Let me not live,
If the young bridegroom, longing for his night,
Was ever half so fond.

DOLABELLA. I must be silent, for my soul is busy
About a nobler work; she's new come home,
Like a long-absent man, and wanders o'er
Each room, a stranger to her own, to look
If all be safe.

ANTONY. Thou hast what's left of me;
For I am now so sunk from what I was,
Thou find'st me at my lowest water-mark.
The rivers that ran in, and raised my fortunes,
Are all dried up, or take another course:
What I have left is from my native spring;

I've still a heart that swells, in scorn of fate,
And lifts me to my banks.

DOLABELLA. Still you are lord of all the world to me.

ANTONY. Why, then I yet am so; for thou art all.
If I had any joy when thou wert absent,
I grudged it to myself; methought I robbed
Thee of thy part. But, O my Dolabella!
Thou has beheld me other than I am.
Hast thou not seen my morning chambers filled
With sceptred slaves, who waited to salute me?
With eastern monarchs, who forgot the sun,
To worship my uprising?--menial kings
Ran coursing up and down my palace-yard,
Stood silent in my presence, watched my eyes,
And, at my least command, all started out,
Like racers to the goal.

DOLABELLA. Slaves to your fortune.

ANTONY. Fortune is Caesar's now; and what am I?

VENTIDIUS. What you have made yourself; I will not flatter.

ANTONY. Is this friendly done?

DOLABELLA. Yes; when his end is so, I must join with him;
Indeed I must, and yet you must not chide;
Why am I else your friend?

ANTONY. Take heed, young man,
How thou upbraid'st my love: The queen has eyes,
And thou too hast a soul. Canst thou remember,
When, swelled with hatred, thou beheld'st her first,
As accessory to thy brother's death?

DOLABELLA. Spare my remembrance; 'twas a guilty day,
And still the blush hangs here.

ANTONY. To clear herself,
For sending him no aid, she came from Egypt.
Her galley down the silver Cydnus rowed,
The tackling silk, the streamers waved with gold;
The gentle winds were lodged in purple sails:
Her nymphs, like Nereids, round her couch were placed;
Where she, another sea-born Venus, lay.

DOLABELLA. No more; I would not hear it.

ANTONY. Oh, you must!
She lay, and leant her cheek upon her hand,
And cast a look so languishingly sweet,
As if, secure of all beholders' hearts,
Neglecting, she could take them: boys, like Cupids,
Stood fanning, with their painted wings, the winds.
That played about her face. But if she smiled
A darting glory seemed to blaze abroad,
That men's desiring eyes were never wearied,
But hung upon the object: To soft flutes
The silver oars kept time; and while they played,
The hearing gave new pleasure to the sight;
And both to thought. 'Twas heaven, or somewhat more;
For she so charmed all hearts, that gazing crowds
Stood panting on the shore, and wanted breath
To give their welcome voice.
Then, Dolabella, where was then thy soul?
Was not thy fury quite disarmed with wonder?
Didst thou not shrink behind me from those eyes
And whisper in my ear--Oh, tell her not
That I accused her with my brother's death?

DOLABELLA. And should my weakness be a plea for yours?
Mine was an age when love might be excused,
When kindly warmth, and when my springing youth
Made it a debt to nature. Yours--

VENTIDIUS. Speak boldly.
Yours, he would say, in your declining age,
When no more heat was left but what you forced,
When all the sap was needful for the trunk,
When it went down, then you constrained the course,
And robbed from nature, to supply desire;
In you (I would not use so harsh a word)
'Tis but plain dotage.

ANTONY. Ha!

DOLABELLA. 'Twas urged too home.--
But yet the loss was private, that I made;
'Twas but myself I lost: I lost no legions;
I had no world to lose, no people's love.

ANTONY. This from a friend?

DOLABELLA. Yes, Antony, a true one;
A friend so tender, that each word I speak
Stabs my own heart, before it reach your ear.

Oh, judge me not less kind, because I chide!
To Caesar I excuse you.

ANTONY. O ye gods!
Have I then lived to be excused to Caesar?

DOLABELLA. As to your equal.

ANTONY. Well, he's but my equal:
While I wear this he never shall be more.

DOLABELLA. I bring conditions from him.

ANTONY. Are they noble?
Methinks thou shouldst not bring them else; yet he
Is full of deep dissembling; knows no honour
Divided from his interest. Fate mistook him;
For nature meant him for an usurer:
He's fit indeed to buy, not conquer kingdoms.

VENTIDIUS. Then, granting this,
What power was theirs, who wrought so hard a temper
To honourable terms?

ANTONY. I was my Dolabella, or some god.

DOLABELLA. Nor I, nor yet Maecenas, nor Agrippa:
They were your enemies; and I, a friend,
Too weak alone; yet 'twas a Roman's deed.

ANTONY. 'Twas like a Roman done: show me that man,
Who has preserved my life, my love, my honour;
Let me but see his face.

VENTIDIUS. That task is mine,
And, Heaven, thou know'st how pleasing.
[Exit VENTIDIUS.]

DOLABELLA. You'll remember
To whom you stand obliged?

ANTONY. When I forget it
Be thou unkind, and that's my greatest curse.
My queen shall thank him too,

DOLABELLA. I fear she will not.

ANTONY. But she shall do it: The queen, my Dolabella!
Hast thou not still some grudgings of thy fever?

DOLABELLA. I would not see her lost.

ANTONY. When I forsake her,
Leave me my better stars! for she has truth
Beyond her beauty. Caesar tempted her,
At no less price than kingdoms, to betray me;
But she resisted all: and yet thou chidest me
For loving her too well. Could I do so?

DOLABELLA. Yes; there's my reason.

Re-enter VENTIDIUS, with OCTAVIA,
leading ANTONY'S two little DAUGHTERS

ANTONY. Where?--Octavia there!
[Starting back.]

VENTIDIUS. What, is she poison to you?--a disease?
Look on her, view her well, and those she brings:
Are they all strangers to your eyes? has nature
No secret call, no whisper they are yours?

DOLABELLA. For shame, my lord, if not for love, receive them
With kinder eyes. If you confess a man,
Meet them, embrace them, bid them welcome to you.
Your arms should open, even without your knowledge,
To clasp them in; your feet should turn to wings,
To bear you to them; and your eyes dart out
And aim a kiss, ere you could reach the lips.

ANTONY. I stood amazed, to think how they came hither.

VENTIDIUS. I sent for them; I brought them in unknown
To Cleopatra's guards.

DOLABELLA. Yet, are you cold?

OCTAVIA. Thus long I have attended for my welcome;
Which, as a stranger, sure I might expect.
Who am I?

ANTONY. Caesar's sister.

OCTAVIA. That's unkind.
Had I been nothing more than Caesar's sister,
Know, I had still remained in Caesar's camp:
But your Octavia, your much injured wife,
Though banished from your bed, driven from your house,

In spite of Caesar's sister, still is yours.
'Tis true, I have a heart disdains your coldness,
And prompts me not to seek what you should offer;
But a wife's virtue still surmounts that pride.
I come to claim you as my own; to show
My duty first; to ask, nay beg, your kindness:
Your hand, my lord; 'tis mine, and I will have it.

[Taking his hand.]

VENTIDIUS. Do, take it; thou deserv'st it.

DOLABELLA. On my soul,
And so she does: she's neither too submissive,
Nor yet too haughty; but so just a mean
Shows, as it ought, a wife and Roman too.

ANTONY. I fear, Octavia, you have begged my life.

OCTAVIA. Begged it, my lord?

ANTONY. Yes, begged it, my ambassadress;
Poorly and basely begged it of your brother.

OCTAVIA. Poorly and basely I could never beg:
Nor could my brother grant.

ANTONY. Shall I, who, to my kneeling slave, could say,
Rise up, and be a king; shall I fall down
And cry,--Forgive me, Caesar! Shall I set
A man, my equal, in the place of Jove,
As he could give me being? No; that word,
Forgive, would choke me up,
And die upon my tongue.

DOLABELLA. You shall not need it.

ANTONY. I will not need it. Come, you've all betrayed me,--
My friend too!--to receive some vile conditions.
My wife has bought me, with her prayers and tears;
And now I must become her branded slave.
In every peevish mood, she will upbraid
The life she gave: if I but look awry,
She cries--I'll tell my brother.

OCTAVIA. My hard fortune
Subjects me still to your unkind mistakes.
But the conditions I have brought are such,
Your need not blush to take: I love your honour,
Because 'tis mine; it never shall be said,

Octavia's husband was her brother's slave.
Sir, you are free; free, even from her you loathe;
For, though my brother bargains for your love,
Makes me the price and cement of your peace,
I have a soul like yours; I cannot take
Your love as alms, nor beg what I deserve.
I'll tell my brother we are reconciled;
He shall draw back his troops, and you shall march
To rule the East: I may be dropt at Athens;
No matter where. I never will complain,
But only keep the barren name of wife,
And rid you of the trouble.

VENTIDIUS. Was ever such a strife of sullen honour! [Apart]
Both scorn to be obliged.

DOLABELLA. Oh, she has touched him in the tenderest part;[Apart]
See how he redden with despite and shame,
To be outdone in generosity!

VENTIDIUS. See how he winks! how he dries up a tear, [Apart]
That fain would fall!

ANTONY. Octavia, I have heard you, and must praise
The greatness of your soul;
But cannot yield to what you have proposed:
For I can ne'er be conquered but by love;
And you do all for duty. You would free me,
And would be dropt at Athens; was't not so?

OCTAVIA. It was, my lord.

ANTONY. Then I must be obliged
To one who loves me not; who, to herself,
May call me thankless and ungrateful man:--
I'll not endure it; no.

VENTIDIUS. I am glad it pinches there.
[Aside.]

OCTAVIA. Would you triumph o'er poor Octavia's virtue?
That pride was all I had to bear me up;
That you might think you owed me for your life,
And owed it to my duty, not my love.
I have been injured, and my haughty soul
Could brook but ill the man who slighted my bed.

ANTONY. Therefore you love me not.

OCTAVIA. Therefore, my lord,
I should not love you.

ANTONY. Therefore you would leave me?

OCTAVIA. And therefore I should leave you--if I could.

DOLABELLA. Her soul's too great, after such injuries,
To say she loves; and yet she lets you see it.
Her modesty and silence plead her cause.

ANTONY. O Dolabella, which way shall I turn?
I find a secret yielding in my soul;
But Cleopatra, who would die with me,
Must she be left? Pity pleads for Octavia;
But does it not plead more for Cleopatra?

VENTIDIUS. Justice and pity both plead for Octavia;
For Cleopatra, neither.
One would be ruined with you; but she first
Had ruined you: The other, you have ruined,
And yet she would preserve you.
In everything their merits are unequal.

ANTONY. O my distracted soul!

OCTAVIA. Sweet Heaven compose it!--
Come, come, my lord, if I can pardon you,
Methinks you should accept it. Look on these;
Are they not yours? or stand they thus neglected,
As they are mine? Go to him, children, go;
Kneel to him, take him by the hand, speak to him;
For you may speak, and he may own you too,
Without a blush; and so he cannot all
His children: go, I say, and pull him to me,
And pull him to yourselves, from that bad woman.
You, Agrippina, hang upon his arms;
And you, Antonia, clasp about his waist:
If he will shake you off, if he will dash you
Against the pavement, you must bear it, children;
For you are mine, and I was born to suffer.
[Here the CHILDREN go to him, etc.]

VENTIDIUS. Was ever sight so moving?--Emperor!

DOLABELLA. Friend!

OCTAVIA. Husband!

BOTH CHILDREN. Father!

ANTONY. I am vanquished: take me,
Octavia; take me, children; share me all.

[Embracing them.]

I've been a thriftless debtor to your loves,
And run out much, in riot, from your stock;
But all shall be amended.

OCTAVIA. O blest hour!

DOLABELLA. O happy change!

VENTIDIUS. My joy stops at my tongue;
But it has found two channels here for one,
And bubbles out above.

ANTONY. [to OCTAVIA]
This is thy triumph; lead me where thou wilt;
Even to thy brother's camp.

OCTAVIA. All there are yours.

Enter ALEXAS hastily

ALEXAS. The queen, my mistress, sir, and yours--

ANTONY. 'Tis past.--
Octavia, you shall stay this night: To-morrow,
Caesar and we are one.

[Exit leading OCTAVIA; DOLABELLA and the CHILDREN follow.]

VENTIDIUS. There's news for you; run, my officious eunuch,
Be sure to be the first; haste forward:
Haste, my dear eunuch, haste.

[Exit.]

ALEXAS. This downright fighting fool, this thick-skulled hero,
This blunt, unthinking instrument of death,
With plain dull virtue has outgone my wit.
Pleasure forsook my earliest infancy;
The luxury of others robbed my cradle,
And ravished thence the promise of a man.
Cast out from nature, disinherited
Of what her meanest children claim by kind,
Yet greatness kept me from contempt: that's gone.
Had Cleopatra followed my advice,
Then he had been betrayed who now forsakes.

She dies for love; but she has known its joys:
Gods, is this just, that I, who know no joys,
Must die, because she loves?

Enter CLEOPATRA, CHARMION, IRAS, and Train

O madam, I have seen what blasts my eyes!
Octavia's here.

CLEOPATRA. Peace with that raven's note.
I know it too; and now am in
The pangs of death.

ALEXAS. You are no more a queen;
Egypt is lost.

CLEOPATRA. What tell'st thou me of Egypt?
My life, my soul is lost! Octavia has him!--
O fatal name to Cleopatra's love!
My kisses, my embraces now are hers;
While I--But thou hast seen my rival; speak,
Does she deserve this blessing? Is she fair?
Bright as a goddess? and is all perfection
Confined to her? It is. Poor I was made
Of that coarse matter, which, when she was finished,
The gods threw by for rubbish.

ALEXAS. She is indeed a very miracle.

CLEOPATRA. Death to my hopes, a miracle!

ALEXAS. A miracle;
[Bowing.]
I mean of goodness; for in beauty, madam,
You make all wonders cease.

CLEOPATRA. I was too rash:
Take this in part of recompense. But, oh!
[Giving a ring.]
I fear thou flatterest me.

CHARMION. She comes! she's here!

IRAS. Fly, madam, Caesar's sister!

CLEOPATRA. Were she the sister of the thunderer Jove,
And bore her brother's lightning in her eyes,
Thus would I face my rival.

[Meets OCTAVIA with VENTIDIUS. OCTAVIA bears up

to her. Their Trains come up on either side.]

OCTAVIA. I need not ask if you are Cleopatra;
Your haughty carriage--

CLEOPATRA. Shows I am a queen:
Nor need I ask you, who you are.

OCTAVIA. A Roman:
A name, that makes and can unmake a queen.

CLEOPATRA. Your lord, the man who serves me, is a Roman.

OCTAVIA. He was a Roman, till he lost that name,
To be a slave in Egypt; but I come
To free him thence.

CLEOPATRA. Peace, peace, my lover's Juno.
When he grew weary of that household clog,
He chose my easier bonds.

OCTAVIA. I wonder not
Your bonds are easy: you have long been practised
In that lascivious art: He's not the first
For whom you spread your snares: Let Caesar witness.

CLEOPATRA. I loved not Caesar; 'twas but gratitude
I paid his love: The worst your malice can,
Is but to say the greatest of mankind
Has been my slave. The next, but far above him
In my esteem, is he whom law calls yours,
But whom his love made mine.

OCTAVIA. I would view nearer.
[Coming up close to her.]
That face, which has so long usurped my right,
To find the inevitable charms, that catch
Mankind so sure, that ruined my dear lord.

CLEOPATRA. Oh, you do well to search; for had you known
But half these charms, you had not lost his heart.

OCTAVIA. Far be their knowledge from a Roman lady,
Far from a modest wife! Shame of our sex,
Dost thou not blush to own those black endearments,
That make sin pleasing?

CLEOPATRA. You may blush, who want them.
If bounteous nature, if indulgent Heaven

Have given me charms to please the bravest man,
Should I not thank them? Should I be ashamed,
And not be proud? I am, that he has loved me;
And, when I love not him, Heaven change this face
For one like that.

OCTAVIA. Thou lov'st him not so well.

CLEOPATRA. I love him better, and deserve him more.

OCTAVIA. You do not; cannot: You have been his ruin.
Who made him cheap at Rome, but Cleopatra?
Who made him scorned abroad, but Cleopatra?
At Actium, who betrayed him? Cleopatra.
Who made his children orphans, and poor me
A wretched widow? only Cleopatra.

CLEOPATRA. Yet she, who loves him best, is Cleopatra.
If you have suffered, I have suffered more.
You bear the specious title of a wife,
To gild your cause, and draw the pitying world
To favour it: the world condemns poor me.
For I have lost my honour, lost my fame,
And stained the glory of my royal house,
And all to bear the branded name of mistress.
There wants but life, and that too I would lose
For him I love.

OCTAVIA. Be't so, then; take thy wish.

[Exit with her Train.]

CLEOPATRA. And 'tis my wish,
Now he is lost for whom alone I lived.
My sight grows dim, and every object dances,
And swims before me, in the maze of death.
My spirits, while they were opposed, kept up;
They could not sink beneath a rival's scorn!
But now she's gone, they faint.

ALEXAS. Mine have had leisure
To recollect their strength, and furnish counsel,
To ruin her, who else must ruin you.

CLEOPATRA. Vain promiser!
Lead me, my Charmion; nay, your hand too, Iras.
My grief has weight enough to sink you both.
Conduct me to some solitary chamber,
And draw the curtains round;
Then leave me to myself, to take alone

My fill of grief:

There I till death will his unkindness weep;
As harmless infants moan themselves asleep.

[Exeunt.]

Act IV

Scene I

Enter ANTONY and DOLABELLA

DOLABELLA. Why would you shift it from yourself on me?
Can you not tell her, you must part?

ANTONY. I cannot.

I could pull out an eye, and bid it go,
And t'other should not weep. O Dolabella,
How many deaths are in this word, DEPART!
I dare not trust my tongue to tell her so:
One look of hers would thaw me into tears,
And I should melt, till I were lost again.

DOLABELLA. Then let Ventidius;
He's rough by nature.

ANTONY. Oh, he'll speak too harshly;
He'll kill her with the news: Thou, only thou.

DOLABELLA. Nature has cast me in so soft a mould,
That but to hear a story, feigned for pleasure,
Of some sad lover's death, moistens my eyes,
And robs me of my manhood. I should speak
So faintly, with such fear to grieve her heart,
She'd not believe it earnest.

ANTONY. Therefore,--therefore
Thou only, thou art fit: Think thyself me;
And when thou speak'st (but let it first be long),
Take off the edge from every sharper sound,
And let our parting be as gently made,
As other loves begin: Wilt thou do this?

DOLABELLA. What you have said so sinks into my soul,
That, if I must speak, I shall speak just so.

ANTONY. I leave you then to your sad task: Farewell.
I sent her word to meet you.

[Goes to the door, and comes back.]
I forgot;
Let her be told, I'll make her peace with mine,
Her crown and dignity shall be preserved,
If I have power with Caesar.--Oh, be sure
To think on that.

DOLABELLA. Fear not, I will remember.
[ANTONY goes again to the door, and comes back.]

ANTONY. And tell her, too, how much I was constrained;
I did not this, but with extremest force.
Desire her not to hate my memory,
For I still cherish hers:--insist on that.

DOLABELLA. Trust me. I'll not forget it.

ANTONY. Then that's all.

[Goes out, and returns again.]
Wilt thou forgive my fondness this once more?
Tell her, though we shall never meet again,
If I should hear she took another love,
The news would break my heart.--Now I must go;
For every time I have returned, I feel
My soul more tender; and my next command
Would be, to bid her stay, and ruin both.

[Exit.]

DOLABELLA. Men are but children of a larger growth;
Our appetites as apt to change as theirs,
And full as craving too, and full as vain;
And yet the soul, shut up in her dark room,
Viewing so clear abroad, at home sees nothing:
But, like a mole in earth, busy and blind,
Works all her folly up, and casts it outward
To the world's open view: Thus I discovered,
And blamed the love of ruined Antony:
Yet wish that I were he, to be so ruined.

Enter VENTIDIUS above

VENTIDIUS. Alone, and talking to himself? concerned too?
Perhaps my guess is right; he loved her once,
And may pursue it still.

DOLABELLA. O friendship! friendship!
Ill canst thou answer this; and reason, worse:
Unfaithful in the attempt; hopeless to win;
And if I win, undone: mere madness all.

And yet the occasion's fair. What injury
To him, to wear the robe which he throws by!

VENTIDIUS. None, none at all. This happens as I wish,
To ruin her yet more with Antony.

Enter CLEOPATRA talking with ALEXAS;
CHARMION, IRAS on the other side.

DOLABELLA. She comes! What charms have sorrow on that face!
Sorrow seems pleased to dwell with so much sweetness;
Yet, now and then, a melancholy smile
Breaks loose, like lightning in a winter's night,
And shows a moment's day.

VENTIDIUS. If she should love him too! her eunuch there?
That porc'pisce bodes ill weather. Draw, draw nearer,
Sweet devil, that I may hear.

ALEXAS. Believe me; try
[DOLABELLA goes over to CHARMION and IRAS;
seems to talk with them.]
To make him jealous; jealousy is like
A polished glass held to the lips when life's in doubt;
If there be breath, 'twill catch the damp, and show it.

CLEOPATRA. I grant you, jealousy's a proof of love,
But 'tis a weak and unavailing medicine;
It puts out the disease, and makes it show,
But has no power to cure.

ALEXAS. 'Tis your last remedy, and strongest too:
And then this Dolabella, who so fit
To practise on? He's handsome, valiant, young,
And looks as he were laid for nature's bait,
To catch weak women's eyes.
He stands already more than half suspected
Of loving you: the least kind word or glance,
You give this youth, will kindle him with love:
Then, like a burning vessel set adrift,
You'll send him down amain before the wind,
To fire the heart of jealous Antony.

CLEOPATRA. Can I do this? Ah, no, my love's so true,
That I can neither hide it where it is,
Nor show it where it is not. Nature meant me
A wife; a silly, harmless, household dove,
Fond without art, and kind without deceit;
But Fortune, that has made a mistress of me,

Has thrust me out to the wide world, unfurnished
Of falsehood to be happy.

ALEXAS. Force yourself.
The event will be, your lover will return,
Doubly desirous to possess the good
Which once he feared to lose.

CLEOPATRA. I must attempt it;
But oh, with what regret!
[Exit ALEXAS. She comes up to DOLABELLA.]

VENTIDIUS. So, now the scene draws near; they're in my reach.

CLEOPATRA. [to DOLABELLA.]
Discoursing with my women! might not I
Share in your entertainment?

CHARMION. You have been
The subject of it, madam.

CLEOPATRA. How! and how!

IRAS. Such praises of your beauty!

CLEOPATRA. Mere poetry.
Your Roman wits, your Gallus and Tibullus,
Have taught you this from Cytheris and Delia.

DOLABELLA. Those Roman wits have never been in Egypt;
Cytheris and Delia else had been unsung:
I, who have seen--had I been born a poet,
Should choose a nobler name.

CLEOPATRA. You flatter me.
But, 'tis your nation's vice: All of your country
Are flatterers, and all false. Your friend's like you.
I'm sure, he sent you not to speak these words.

DOLABELLA. No, madam; yet he sent me--

CLEOPATRA. Well, he sent you--

DOLABELLA. Of a less pleasing errand.

CLEOPATRA. How less pleasing?
Less to yourself, or me?

DOLABELLA. Madam, to both;

For you must mourn, and I must grieve to cause it.

CLEOPATRA. You, Charmion, and your fellow, stand at distance.--
Hold up, my spirits. [Aside.]--Well, now your mournful matter;
For I'm prepared, perhaps can guess it too.

DOLABELLA. I wish you would; for 'tis a thankless office,
To tell ill news: And I, of all your sex,
Most fear displeasing you.

CLEOPATRA. Of all your sex,
I soonest could forgive you, if you should.

VENTIDIUS. Most delicate advances! Women! women!
Dear, damned, inconstant sex!

CLEOPATRA. In the first place,
I am to be forsaken; is't not so?

DOLABELLA. I wish I could not answer to that question.

CLEOPATRA. Then pass it o'er, because it troubles you:
I should have been more grieved another time.
Next I'm to lose my kingdom--Farewell, Egypt!
Yet, is there ary more?

DOLABELLA. Madam, I fear
Your too deep sense of grief has turned your reason.

CLEOPATRA. No, no, I'm not run mad; I can bear fortune:
And love may be expelled by other love,
As poisons are by poisons.

DOLABELLA. You o'erjoy me, madam,
To find your griefs so moderately borne.
You've heard the worst; all are not false like him.

CLEOPATRA. No; Heaven forbid they should.

DOLABELLA. Some men are constant.

CLEOPATRA. And constancy deserves reward, that's certain.

DOLABELLA. Deserves it not; but give it leave to hope.

VENTIDIUS. I'll swear, thou hast my leave. I have enough:
But how to manage this! Well, I'll consider.

[Exit.]

DOLABELLA. I came prepared
To tell you heavy news; news, which I thought
Would fright the blood from your pale cheeks to hear:
But you have met it with a cheerfulness,
That makes my task more easy; and my tongue,
Which on another's message was employed,
Would gladly speak its own.

CLEOPATRA. Hold, Dolabella.
First tell me, were you chosen by my lord?
Or sought you this employment?

DOLABELLA. He picked me out; and, as his bosom friend,
He charged me with his words.

CLEOPATRA. The message then
I know was tender, and each accent smooth,
To mollify that rugged word, DEPART.

DOLABELLA. Oh, you mistake: He chose the harshest words;
With fiery eyes, and contracted brows,
He coined his face in the severest stamp;
And fury shook his fabric, like an earthquake;
He heaved for vent, and burst like bellowing Aetna,
In sounds scarce human--"Hence away for ever,
Let her begone, the blot of my renown,
And bane of all my hopes!"

[All the time of this speech, CLEOPATRA seems more
and more concerned, till she sinks quite down.]

"Let her be driven, as far as men can think,
From man's commerce! she'll poison to the centre."

CLEOPATRA. Oh, I can bear no more!

DOLABELLA. Help, help!--O wretch! O cursed, cursed wretch!
What have I done!

CHARMION. Help, chafe her temples, Iras.

IRAS. Bend, bend her forward quickly.

CHARMION. Heaven be praised,
She comes again.

CLEOPATRA. Oh, let him not approach me.
Why have you brought me back to this loathed being;
The abode of falsehood, violated vows,
And injured love? For pity, let me go;
For, if there be a place of long repose,

I'm sure I want it. My disdainful lord
Can never break that quiet; nor awake
The sleeping soul, with hollowing in my tomb
Such words as fright her hence.--Unkind, unkind!

DOLABELLA. Believe me, 'tis against myself I speak;

[Kneeling.]

That sure desires belief; I injured him:
My friend ne'er spoke those words. Oh, had you seen
How often he came back, and every time
With something more obliging and more kind,
To add to what he said; what dear farewells;
How almost vanquished by his love he parted,
And leaned to what unwillingly he left!
I, traitor as I was, for love of you
(But what can you not do, who made me false?)
I forged that lie; for whose forgiveness kneels
This self-accused, self-punished criminal.

CLEOPATRA. With how much ease believe we what we wish!

Rise, Dolabella; if you have been guilty,
I have contributed, and too much love
Has made me guilty too.
The advance of kindness, which I made, was feigned,
To call back fleeting love by jealousy;
But 'twould not last. Oh, rather let me lose,
Than so ignobly trifle with his heart.

DOLABELLA. I find your breast fenced round from human reach,
Transparent as a rock of solid crystal;
Seen through, but never pierced. My friend, my friend,
What endless treasure hast thou thrown away;
And scattered, like an infant, in the ocean,
Vain sums of wealth, which none can gather thence!

CLEOPATRA. Could you not beg
An hour's admittance to his private ear?
Like one, who wanders through long barren wilds
And yet foreknows no hospitable inn
Is near to succour hunger, eats his fill,
Before his painful march;
So would I feed a while my famished eyes
Before we part; for I have far to go,
If death be far, and never must return.

VENTIDIUS with OCTAVIA, behind

VENTIDIUS. From hence you may discover--oh, sweet, sweet!
Would you indeed? The pretty hand in earnest?

DOLABELLA. I will, for this reward.

[Takes her hand.]

Draw it not back.

'Tis all I e'er will beg.

VENTIDIUS. They turn upon us.

OCTAVIA. What quick eyes has guilt!

VENTIDIUS. Seem not to have observed them, and go on.

[They enter.]

DOLABELLA. Saw you the emperor, Ventidius?

VENTIDIUS. No.

I sought him; but I heard that he was private,
None with him but Hipparchus, his freedman.

DOLABELLA. Know you his business?

VENTIDIUS. Giving him instructions,
And letters to his brother Caesar.

DOLABELLA. Well,

He must be found.

[Exeunt DOLABELLA and CLEOPATRA.]

OCTAVIA. Most glorious impudence!

VENTIDIUS. She looked, methought,
As she would say--Take your old man, Octavia;
Thank you, I'm better here.--
Well, but what use
Make we of this discovery?

OCTAVIA. Let it die.

VENTIDIUS. I pity Dolabella; but she's dangerous:
Her eyes have power beyond Thessalian charms,
To draw the moon from heaven; for eloquence,
The sea-green Syrens taught her voice their flattery;
And, while she speaks, night steals upon the day,
Unmarked of those that hear. Then she's so charming,
Age buds at sight of her, and swells to youth:
The holy priests gaze on her when she smiles;
And with heaved hands, forgetting gravity,
They bless her wanton eyes: Even I, who hate her,
With a malignant joy behold such beauty;

And, while I curse, desire it. Antony
Must needs have some remains of passion still,
Which may ferment into a worse relapse,
If now not fully cured. I know, this minute,
With Caesar he's endeavouring her peace.

OCTAVIA. You have prevailed:--But for a further purpose

[Walks off.]

I'll prove how he will relish this discovery.
What, make a strumpet's peace! it swells my heart:
It must not, shall not be.

VENTIDIUS. His guards appear.
Let me begin, and you shall second me.

Enter ANTONY

ANTONY. Octavia, I was looking you, my love:
What, are your letters ready? I have given
My last instructions.

OCTAVIA. Mine, my lord, are written.

ANTONY. Ventidius.

[Drawing him aside.]

VENTIDIUS. My lord?

ANTONY. A word in private.--
When saw you Dolabella?

VENTIDIUS. Now, my lord,
He parted hence; and Cleopatra with him.

ANTONY. Speak softly.--'Twas by my command he went,
To bear my last farewell.

VENTIDIUS. It looked indeed

[Aloud.]

Like your farewell.

ANTONY. More softly.--My farewell?
What secret meaning have you in those words
Of--My farewell? He did it by my order.

VENTIDIUS. Then he obeyed your order. I suppose

[Aloud.]

You bid him do it with all gentleness,
All kindness, and all--love.

ANTONY. How she mourned,
The poor forsaken creature!

VENTIDIUS. She took it as she ought; she bore your parting
As she did Caesar's, as she would another's,
Were a new love to come.

ANTONY. Thou dost belie her;
[Aloud.]
Most basely, and maliciously belie her.

VENTIDIUS. I thought not to displease you; I have done.

OCTAVIA. You seemed disturbed, my Lord.
[Coming up.]

ANTONY. A very trifle.
Retire, my love.

VENTIDIUS. It was indeed a trifle.
He sent--

ANTONY. No more. Look how thou disobey'st me;
[Angrily.]
Thy life shall answer it.

OCTAVIA. Then 'tis no trifle.

VENTIDIUS. [to OCTAVIA.]
'Tis less; a very nothing: You too saw it,
As well as I, and therefore 'tis no secret.

ANTONY. She saw it!

VENTIDIUS. Yes: She saw young Dolabella--

ANTONY. Young Dolabella!

VENTIDIUS. Young, I think him young,
And handsome too; and so do others think him.
But what of that? He went by your command,
Indeed 'tis probable, with some kind message;
For she received it graciously; she smiled;
And then he grew familiar with her hand,
Squeezed it, and worried it with ravenous kisses;
She blushed, and sighed, and smiled, and blushed again;
At last she took occasion to talk softly,
And brought her cheek up close, and leaned on his;

At which, he whispered kisses back on hers;
And then she cried aloud--That constancy
Should be rewarded.

OCTAVIA. This I saw and heard.

ANTONY. What woman was it, whom you heard and saw
So playful with my friend?
Not Cleopatra?

VENTIDIUS. Even she, my lord.

ANTONY. My Cleopatra?

VENTIDIUS. Your Cleopatra;
Dolabella's Cleopatra; every man's Cleopatra.

ANTONY. Thou liest.

VENTIDIUS. I do not lie, my lord.
Is this so strange? Should mistresses be left,
And not provide against a time of change?
You know she's not much used to lonely nights.

ANTONY. I'll think no more on't.
I know 'tis false, and see the plot betwixt you.--
You needed not have gone this way, Octavia.
What harms it you that Cleopatra's just?
She's mine no more. I see, and I forgive:
Urge it no further, love.

OCTAVIA. Are you concerned,
That she's found false?

ANTONY. I should be, were it so;
For, though 'tis past, I would not that the world
Should tax my former choice, that I loved one
Of so light note; but I forgive you both.

VENTIDIUS. What has my age deserved, that you should think
I would abuse your ears with perjury?
If Heaven be true, she's false.

ANTONY. Though heaven and earth
Should witness it, I'll not believe her tainted.

VENTIDIUS. I'll bring you, then, a witness
From hell, to prove her so.--Nay, go not back;
[Seeing ALEXAS just entering, and starting back.]

For stay you must and shall.

ALEXAS. What means my lord?

VENTIDIUS. To make you do what most you hate,--speak truth.
You are of Cleopatra's private counsel,
Of her bed-counsel, her lascivious hours;
Are conscious of each nightly change she makes,
And watch her, as Chaldaeans do the moon,
Can tell what signs she passes through, what day.

ALEXAS. My noble lord!

VENTIDIUS. My most illustrious pander,
No fine set speech, no cadence, no turned periods,
But a plain homespun truth, is what I ask.
I did, myself, o'erhear your queen make love
To Dolabella. Speak; for I will know,
By your confession, what more passed betwixt them;
How near the business draws to your employment;
And when the happy hour.

ANTONY. Speak truth, Alexas; whether it offend
Or please Ventidius, care not: Justify
Thy injured queen from malice: Dare his worst.

OCTAVIA. [aside.] See how he gives him courage! how he fears
To find her false! and shuts his eyes to truth,
Willing to be misled!

ALEXAS. As far as love may plead for woman's frailty,
Urged by desert and greatness of the lover,
So far, divine Octavia, may my queen
Stand even excused to you for loving him
Who is your lord: so far, from brave Ventidius,
May her past actions hope a fair report.

ANTONY. 'Tis well, and truly spoken: mark, Ventidius.

ALEXAS. To you, most noble emperor, her strong passion
Stands not excused, but wholly justified.
Her beauty's charms alone, without her crown,
From Ind and Meroe drew the distant vows
Of sighing kings; and at her feet were laid
The sceptres of the earth, exposed on heaps,
To choose where she would reign:
She thought a Roman only could deserve her,
And, of all Romans, only Antony;
And, to be less than wife to you, disdained

Their lawful passion.

ANTONY. 'Tis but truth.

ALEXAS. And yet, though love, and your unmatched desert,
Have drawn her from the due regard of honour,
At last Heaven opened her unwilling eyes
To see the wrongs she offered fair Octavia,
Whose holy bed she lawlessly usurped.
The sad effects of this improsperous war
Confirmed those pious thoughts.

VENTIDIUS. [aside.] Oh, wheel you there?
Observe him now; the man begins to mend,
And talk substantial reason.--Fear not, eunuch;
The emperor has given thee leave to speak.

ALEXAS. Else had I never dared to offend his ears
With what the last necessity has urged
On my forsaken mistress; yet I must not
Presume to say, her heart is wholly altered.

ANTONY. No, dare not for thy life, I charge thee dare not
Pronounce that fatal word!

OCTAVIA. Must I bear this? Good Heaven, afford me patience.
[Aside.]

VENTIDIUS. On, sweet eunuch; my dear half-man, proceed.

ALEXAS. Yet Dolabella
Has loved her long; he, next my god-like lord,
Deserves her best; and should she meet his passion,
Rejected, as she is, by him she loved----

ANTONY. Hence from my sight! for I can bear no more:
Let furies drag thee quick to hell; let all
The longer damned have rest; each torturing hand
Do thou employ, till Cleopatra comes;
Then join thou too, and help to torture her!
[Exit ALEXAS, thrust out by ANTONY.]

OCTAVIA. 'Tis not well.
Indeed, my lord, 'tis much unkind to me,
To show this passion, this extreme concernment,
For an abandoned, faithless prostitute.

ANTONY. Octavia, leave me; I am much disordered:
Leave me, I say.

OCTAVIA. My lord!

ANTONY. I bid you leave me.

VENTIDIUS. Obey him, madam: best withdraw a while,
And see how this will work.

OCTAVIA. Wherein have I offended you, my lord,
That I am bid to leave you? Am I false,
Or infamous? Am I a Cleopatra?
Were I she,
Base as she is, you would not bid me leave you;
But hang upon my neck, take slight excuses,
And fawn upon my falsehood.

ANTONY. 'Tis too much.
Too much, Octavia; I am pressed with sorrows
Too heavy to be borne; and you add more:
I would retire, and recollect what's left
Of man within, to aid me.

OCTAVIA. You would mourn,
In private, for your love, who has betrayed you.
You did but half return to me: your kindness
Lingered behind with her, I hear, my lord,
You make conditions for her,
And would include her treaty. Wondrous proofs
Of love to me!

ANTONY. Are you my friend, Ventidius?
Or are you turned a Dolabella too,
And let this fury loose?

VENTIDIUS. Oh, be advised,
Sweet madam, and retire.

OCTAVIA. Yes, I will go; but never to return.
You shall no more be haunted with this Fury.
My lord, my lord, love will not always last,
When urged with long unkindness and disdain:
Take her again, whom you prefer to me;
She stays but to be called. Poor cozened man!
Let a feigned parting give her back your heart,
Which a feigned love first got; for injured me,
Though my just sense of wrongs forbid my stay,
My duty shall be yours.
To the dear pledges of our former love
My tenderness and care shall be transferred,

And they shall cheer, by turns, my widowed nights:
So, take my last farewell; for I despair
To have you whole, and scorn to take you half.
[Exit.]

VENTIDIUS. I combat Heaven, which blasts my best designs;
My last attempt must be to win her back;
But oh! I fear in vain.

[Exit.]

ANTONY. Why was I framed with this plain, honest heart,
Which knows not to disguise its griefs and weakness,
But bears its workings outward to the world?
I should have kept the mighty anguish in,
And forced a smile at Cleopatra's falsehood:
Octavia had believed it, and had stayed.
But I am made a shallow-forded stream,
Seen to the bottom: all my clearness scorned,
And all my faults exposed.--See where he comes,

Enter DOLABELLA

Who has profaned the sacred name of friend,
And worn it into vileness!
With how secure a brow, and specious form,
He gilds the secret villain! Sure that face
Was meant for honesty; but Heaven mismatched it,
And furnished treason out with nature's pomp,
To make its work more easy.

DOLABELLA. O my friend!

ANTONY. Well, Dolabella, you performed my message?

DOLABELLA. I did, unwillingly.

ANTONY. Unwillingly?
Was it so hard for you to bear our parting?
You should have wished it.

DOLABELLA. Why?

ANTONY. Because you love me.
And she received my message with as true,
With as unfeigned a sorrow as you brought it?

DOLABELLA. She loves you, even to madness.

ANTONY. Oh, I know it.

You, Dolabella, do not better know
How much she loves me. And should I
Forsake this beauty? This all-perfect creature?

DOLABELLA. I could not, were she mine.

ANTONY. And yet you first
Persuaded me: How come you altered since?

DOLABELLA. I said at first I was not fit to go:
I could not hear her sighs, and see her tears,
But pity must prevail: And so, perhaps,
It may again with you; for I have promised,
That she should take her last farewell: And, see,
She comes to claim my word.

Enter CLEOPATRA

ANTONY. False Dolabella!

DOLABELLA. What's false, my lord?

ANTONY. Why, Dolabella's false,
And Cleopatra's false; both false and faithless.
Draw near, you well-joined wickedness, you serpents,
Whom I have in my kindly bosom warmed,
Till I am stung to death.

DOLABELLA. My lord, have I
Deserved to be thus used?

CLEOPATRA. Can Heaven prepare
A newer torment? Can it find a curse
Beyond our separation?

ANTONY. Yes, if fate
Be just, much greater: Heaven should be ingenious
In punishing such crimes. The rolling stone,
And gnawing vulture, were slight pains, invented
When Jove was young, and no examples known
Of mighty ills; but you have ripened sin,
To such a monstrous growth, 'twill pose the gods
To find an equal torture. Two, two such!--
Oh, there's no further name,--two such! to me,
To me, who locked my soul within your breasts,
Had no desires, no joys, no life, but you;
When half the globe was mine, I gave it you
In dowry with my heart; I had no use,
No fruit of all, but you: A friend and mistress

Was what the world could give. O Cleopatra!
O Dolabella! how could you betray
This tender heart, which with an infant fondness
Lay lulled betwixt your bosoms, and there slept,
Secure of injured faith?

DOLABELLA. If she has wronged you,
Heaven, hell, and you revenge it.

ANTONY. If she has wronged me!
Thou wouldst evade thy part of guilt; but swear
Thou lov'st not her.

DOLABELLA. Not so as I love you.

ANTONY. Not so? Swear, swear, I say, thou dost not love her.

DOLABELLA. No more than friendship will allow.

ANTONY. No more?
Friendship allows thee nothing: Thou art perjured--
And yet thou didst not swear thou lov'st her not;
But not so much, no more. O trifling hypocrite,
Who dar'st not own to her, thou dost not love,
Nor own to me, thou dost! Ventidius heard it;
Octavia saw it.

CLEOPATRA. They are enemies.

ANTONY. Alexas is not so: He, he confessed it;
He, who, next hell, best knew it, he avowed it.
Why do I seek a proof beyond yourself?

[To DOLABELLA.]

You, whom I sent to bear my last farewell,
Returned, to plead her stay.

DOLABELLA. What shall I answer?
If to have loved be guilt, then I have sinned;
But if to have repented of that love
Can wash away my crime, I have repented.
Yet, if I have offended past forgiveness,
Let not her suffer: She is innocent.

CLEOPATRA. Ah, what will not a woman do, who loves?
What means will she refuse, to keep that heart,
Where all her joys are placed? 'Twas I encouraged,
'Twas I blew up the fire that scorched his soul,
To make you jealous, and by that regain you.
But all in vain; I could not counterfeit:

In spite of all the dams my love broke o'er,
And drowned by heart again: fate took the occasion;
And thus one minute's feigning has destroyed
My whole life's truth.

ANTONY. Thin cobweb arts of falsehood;
Seen, and broke through at first.

DOLABELLA. Forgive your mistress.

CLEOPATRA. Forgive your friend.

ANTONY. You have convinced yourselves.
You plead each other's cause: What witness have you,
That you but meant to raise my jealousy?

CLEOPATRA. Ourselves, and Heaven.

ANTONY. Guilt witnesses for guilt. Hence, love and friendship!
You have no longer place in human breasts,
These two have driven you out: Avoid my sight!
I would not kill the man whom I have loved,
And cannot hurt the woman; but avoid me:
I do not know how long I can be tame;
For, if I stay one minute more, to think
How I am wronged, my justice and revenge
Will cry so loud within me, that my pity
Will not be heard for either.

DOLABELLA. Heaven has but
Our sorrow for our sins; and then delights
To pardon erring man: Sweet mercy seems
Its darling attribute, which limits justice;
As if there were degrees in infinite,
And infinite would rather want perfection
Than punish to extent.

ANTONY. I can forgive
A foe; but not a mistress and a friend.
Treason is there in its most horrid shape,
Where trust is greatest; and the soul resigned,
Is stabbed by its own guards: I'll hear no more;
Hence from my sight for ever!

CLEOPATRA. How? for ever!
I cannot go one moment from your sight,
And must I go for ever?
My joys, my only joys, are centred here:
What place have I to go to? My own kingdom?

That I have lost for you: Or to the Romans?
They hate me for your sake: Or must I wander
The wide world o'er, a helpless, banished woman,
Banished for love of you; banished from you?
Ay, there's the banishment! Oh, hear me; hear me,
With strictest justice: For I beg no favour;
And if I have offended you, then kill me,
But do not banish me.

ANTONY. I must not hear you.
I have a fool within me takes your part;
But honour stops my ears.

CLEOPATRA. For pity hear me!
Would you cast off a slave who followed you?
Who crouched beneath your spurn?--He has no pity!
See, if he gives one tear to my departure;
One look, one kind farewell: O iron heart!
Let all the gods look down, and judge betwixt us,
If he did ever love!

ANTONY. No more: Alexas!

DOLABELLA. A perjured villain!

ANTONY. [to CLEOPATRA.] Your Alexas; yours.

CLEOPATRA. Oh, 'twas his plot; his ruinous design,
To engage you in my love by jealousy.
Hear him; confront him with me; let him speak.

ANTONY. I have; I have.

CLEOPATRA. And if he clear me not--

ANTONY. Your creature! one, who hangs upon your smiles!
Watches your eye, to say or to unsay,
Whate'er you please! I am not to be moved.

CLEOPATRA. Then must we part? Farewell, my cruel lord!
The appearance is against me; and I go,
Unjustified, for ever from your sight.
How I have loved, you know; how yet I love,
My only comfort is, I know myself:
I love you more, even now you are unkind,
Then when you loved me most; so well, so truly
I'll never strive against it; but die pleased,
To think you once were mine.

ANTONY. Good heaven, they weep at parting!
Must I weep too? that calls them innocent.
I must not weep; and yet I must, to think
That I must not forgive.--
Live, but live wretched; 'tis but just you should,
Who made me so: Live from each other's sight:
Let me not hear you meet. Set all the earth,
And all the seas, betwixt your sundered loves:
View nothing common but the sun and skies.
Now, all take several ways;
And each your own sad fate, with mine, deplore;
That you were false, and I could trust no more.
[Exeunt severally.]

Act V

Scene I

Enter CLEOPATRA, CHARMION, and IRAS

CHARMION. Be juster, Heaven; such virtue punished thus,
Will make us think that chance rules all above,
And shuffles, with a random hand, the lots,
Which man is forced to draw.

CLEOPATRA. I could tear out these eyes, that gained his heart,
And had not power to keep it. O the curse
Of doting on, even when I find it dotage!
Bear witness, gods, you heard him bid me go;
You, whom he mocked with imprecating vows
Of promised faith!--I'll die; I will not bear it.
You may hold me--

[She pulls out her dagger, and they hold her.]
But I can keep my breath; I can die inward,
And choke this love.

Enter ALEXAS

IRAS. Help, O Alexas, help!
The queen grows desperate; her soul struggles in her
With all the agonies of love and rage,
And strives to force its passage.

CLEOPATRA. Let me go.
Art thou there, traitor!--O,
O for a little breath, to vent my rage,
Give, give me way, and let me loose upon him.

ALEXAS. Yes, I deserve it, for my ill-timed truth.
Was it for me to prop
The ruins of a falling majesty?
To place myself beneath the mighty flaw,
Thus to be crushed, and pounded into atoms,
By its o'erwhelming weight? 'Tis too presuming
For subjects to preserve that wilful power,
Which courts its own destruction.

CLEOPATRA. I would reason
More calmly with you. Did not you o'errule,
And force my plain, direct, and open love,
Into these crooked paths of jealousy?
Now, what's the event? Octavia is removed;
But Cleopatra's banished. Thou, thou villain,
Hast pushed my boat to open sea; to prove,
At my sad cost, if thou canst steer it back.
It cannot be; I'm lost too far; I'm ruined:
Hence, thou impostor, traitor, monster, devil!--
I can no more: Thou, and my griefs, have sunk
Me down so low, that I want voice to curse thee.

ALEXAS. Suppose some shipwrecked seaman near the shore,
Dropping and faint, with climbing up the cliff,
If, from above, some charitable hand
Pull him to safety, hazarding himself,
To draw the other's weight; would he look back,
And curse him for his pains? The case is yours;
But one step more, and you have gained the height.

CLEOPATRA. Sunk, never more to rise.

ALEXAS. Octavia's gone, and Dolabella banished.
Believe me, madam, Antony is yours.
His heart was never lost, but started off
To jealousy, love's last retreat and covert;
Where it lies hid in shades, watchful in silence,
And listening for the sound that calls it back.
Some other, any man ('tis so advanced),
May perfect this unfinished work, which I
(Unhappy only to myself) have left
So easy to his hand.

CLEOPATRA. Look well thou do't; else--

ALEXAS. Else, what your silence threatens.--Antony
Is mounted up the Pharos; from whose turret,
He stands surveying our Egyptian galleys,

Engaged with Caesar's fleet. Now death or conquest!
If the first happen, fate acquits my promise;
If we o'ercome, the conqueror is yours.

[A distant shout within.]

CHARMION. Have comfort, madam: Did you mark that shout?
[Second shout nearer.]

IRAS. Hark! they redouble it.

ALEXAS. 'Tis from the port.
The loudness shows it near: Good news, kind heavens!

CLEOPATRA. Osiris make it so!

Enter SERAPION

SERAPION. Where, where's the queen?

ALEXAS. How frightfully the holy coward stares
As if not yet recovered of the assault,
When all his gods, and, what's more dear to him,
His offerings, were at stake.

SERAPION. O horror, horror!
Egypt has been; our latest hour has come:
The queen of nations, from her ancient seat,
Is sunk for ever in the dark abyss:
Time has unrolled her glories to the last,
And now closed up the volume.

CLEOPATRA. Be more plain:
Say, whence thou comest; though fate is in thy face,
Which from the haggard eyes looks wildly out,
And threatens ere thou speakest.

SERAPION. I came from Pharos;
From viewing (spare me, and imagine it)
Our land's last hope, your navy--

CLEOPATRA. Vanquished?

SERAPION. No:
They fought not.

CLEOPATRA. Then they fled.

SERAPION. Nor that. I saw,
With Antony, your well-appointed fleet

Row out; and thrice he waved his hand on high,
And thrice with cheerful cries they shouted back:
'Twas then false Fortune, like a fawning strumpet,
About to leave the bankrupt prodigal,
With a dissembled smile would kiss at parting,
And flatter to the last; the well-timed oars,
Now dipt from every bank, now smoothly run
To meet the foe; and soon indeed they met,
But not as foes. In few, we saw their caps
On either side thrown up; the Egyptian galleys,
Received like friends, passed through, and fell behind
The Roman rear: And now, they all come forward,
And ride within the port.

CLEOPATRA. Enough, Serapion:
I've heard my doom.--This needed not, you gods:
When I lost Antony, your work was done;
'Tis but superfluous malice.--Where's my lord?
How bears he this last blow?

SERAPION. His fury cannot be expressed by words:
Thrice he attempted headlong to have fallen
Full on his foes, and aimed at Caesar's galley:
Withheld, he raves on you; cries,--He's betrayed.
Should he now find you--

ALEXAS. Shun him; seek your safety,
Till you can clear your innocence.

CLEOPATRA. I'll stay.

ALEXAS. You must not; haste you to your monument,
While I make speed to Caesar.

CLEOPATRA. Caesar! No,
I have no business with him.

ALEXAS. I can work him
To spare your life, and let this madman perish.

CLEOPATRA. Base fawning wretch! wouldst thou betray him too?
Hence from my sight! I will not hear a traitor;
'Twas thy design brought all this ruin on us.--
Serapion, thou art honest; counsel me:
But haste, each moment's precious.

SERAPION. Retire; you must not yet see Antony.
He who began this mischief,
'Tis just he tempt the danger; let him clear you:

And, since he offered you his servile tongue,
To gain a poor precarious life from Caesar,
Let him expose that fawning eloquence,
And speak to Antony.

ALEXAS. O heavens! I dare not;
I meet my certain death.

CLEOPATRA. Slave, thou deservest it.--
Not that I fear my lord, will I avoid him;
I know him noble: when he banished me,
And thought me false, he scorned to take my life;
But I'll be justified, and then die with him.

ALEXAS. O pity me, and let me follow you.

CLEOPATRA. To death, if thou stir hence. Speak, if thou canst,
Now for thy life, which basely thou wouldest save;
While mine I prize at-this! Come, good Serapion.

[Exeunt CLEOPATRA, SERAPION, CHARMION, and IRAS.]

ALEXAS. O that I less could fear to lose this being,
Which, like a snowball in my coward hand,
The more 'tis grasped, the faster melts away.
Poor reason! what a wretched aid art thou!
For still, in spite of thee,
These two long lovers, soul and body, dread
Their final separation. Let me think:
What can I say, to save myself from death?
No matter what becomes of Cleopatra.

ANTONY. Which way? where?
[Within.]

VENTIDIUS. This leads to the monument.
[Within.]

ALEXAS. Ah me! I hear him; yet I'm unprepared:
My gift of lying's gone;
And this court-devil, which I so oft have raised,
Forsakes me at my need. I dare not stay;
Yet cannot far go hence.

[Exit.]

Enter ANTONY and VENTIDIUS

ANTONY. O happy Caesar! thou hast men to lead:
Think not 'tis thou hast conquered Antony;
But Rome has conquered Egypt. I'm betrayed.

VENTIDIUS. Curse on this treacherous train!
Their soil and heaven infect them all with baseness:
And their young souls come tainted to the world
With the first breath they draw.

ANTONY. The original villain sure no god created;
He was a bastard of the sun, by Nile,
Aped into man; with all his mother's mud
Crusted about his soul.

VENTIDIUS. The nation is
One universal traitor; and their queen
The very spirit and extract of them all.

ANTONY. Is there yet left
A possibility of aid from valour?
Is there one god unsworn to my destruction?
The least unmortgaged hope? for, if there be,
Methinks I cannot fall beneath the fate
Of such a boy as Caesar.
The world's one half is yet in Antony;
And from each limb of it, that's hewed away,
The soul comes back to me.

VENTIDIUS. There yet remain
Three legions in the town. The last assault
Lopt off the rest; if death be your design,--
As I must wish it now,--these are sufficient
To make a heap about us of dead foes,
An honest pile for burial.

ANTONY. They are enough.
We'll not divide our stars; but, side by side,
Fight emulous, and with malicious eyes
Survey each other's acts: So every death
Thou giv'st, I'll take on me, as a just debt,
And pay thee back a soul.

VENTIDIUS. Now you shall see I love you. Not a word
Of chiding more. By my few hours of life,
I am so pleased with this brave Roman fate,
That I would not be Caesar, to outlive you.
When we put off this flesh, and mount together,
I shall be shown to all the ethereal crowd,--
Lo, this is he who died with Antony!

ANTONY. Who knows, but we may pierce through all their troops,
And reach my veterans yet? 'tis worth the 'tempting,

To o'erleap this gulf of fate,
And leave our wandering destinies behind.

Enter ALEXAS, trembling

VENTIDIUS. See, see, that villain!
See Cleopatra stamped upon that face,
With all her cunning, all her arts of falsehood!
How she looks out through those dissembling eyes!
How he sets his countenance for deceit,
And promises a lie, before he speaks!
Let me despatch him first.

[Drawing.]

ALEXAS. O spare me, spare me!

ANTONY. Hold; he's not worth your killing.--On thy life,
Which thou mayst keep, because I scorn to take it,
No syllable to justify thy queen;
Save thy base tongue its office.

ALEXAS. Sir, she is gone.
Where she shall never be molested more
By love, or you.

ANTONY. Fled to her Dolabella!
Die, traitor! I revoke my promise! die!
[Going to kill him.]

ALEXAS. O hold! she is not fled.

ANTONY. She is: my eyes
Are open to her falsehood; my whole life
Has been a golden dream of love and friendship;
But, now I wake, I'm like a merchant, roused
From soft repose, to see his vessel sinking,
And all his wealth cast over. Ungrateful woman!
Who followed me, but as the swallow summer,
Hatching her young ones in my kindly beams,
Singing her flatteries to my morning wake:
But, now my winter comes, she spreads her wings,
And seeks the spring of Caesar.

ALEXAS. Think not so;
Her fortunes have, in all things, mixed with yours.
Had she betrayed her naval force to Rome,
How easily might she have gone to Caesar,
Secure by such a bribe!

VENTIDIUS. She sent it first,
To be more welcome after.

ANTONY. 'Tis too plain;
Else would she have appeared, to clear herself.

ALEXAS. Too fatally she has: she could not bear
To be accused by you; but shut herself
Within her monument; looked down and sighed;
While, from her unchanged face, the silent tears
Dropt, as they had not leave, but stole their parting.
Some indistinguished words she only murmured;
At last, she raised her eyes; and, with such looks
As dying Lucrece cast--

ANTONY. My heart forebodes--

VENTIDIUS. All for the best:--Go on.

ALEXAS. She snatched her poniard,
And, ere we could prevent the fatal blow,
Plunged it within her breast; then turned to me:
Go, bear my lord, said she, my last farewell;
And ask him, if he yet suspect my faith.
More she was saying, but death rushed betwixt.
She half pronounced your name with her last breath,
And buried half within her.

VENTIDIUS. Heaven be praised!

ANTONY. Then art thou innocent, my poor dear love,
And art thou dead?
O those two words! their sound should be divided:
Hadst thou been false, and died; or hadst thou lived,
And hadst been true--But innocence and death!
This shows not well above. Then what am I,
The murderer of this truth, this innocence!
Thoughts cannot form themselves in words so horrid
As can express my guilt!

VENTIDIUS. Is't come to this? The gods have been too gracious;
And thus you thank them for it!

ANTONY. [to ALEXAS.] Why stayest thou here?
Is it for thee to spy upon my soul,
And see its inward mourning? Get thee hence;
Thou art not worthy to behold, what now
Becomes a Roman emperor to perform.

ALEXAS. He loves her still:
His grief betrays it. Good! the joy to find
She's yet alive, completes the reconcilement.
I've saved myself, and her. But, oh! the Romans!
Fate comes too fast upon my wit,
Hunts me too hard, and meets me at each double.

[Aside.]

[Exit.]

VENTIDIUS. Would she had died a little sooner, though!
Before Octavia went, you might have treated:
Now 'twill look tame, and would not be received.
Come, rouse yourself, and let's die warm together.

ANTONY. I will not fight: there's no more work for war.
The business of my angry hours is done.

VENTIDIUS. Caesar is at your gates.

ANTONY. Why, let him enter;
He's welcome now.

VENTIDIUS. What lethargy has crept into your soul?

ANTONY. 'Tis but a scorn of life, and just desire
To free myself from bondage.

VENTIDIUS. Do it bravely.

ANTONY. I will; but not by fighting. O Ventidius!
What should I fight for now?--my queen is dead.
I was but great for her; my power, my empire,
Were but my merchandise to buy her love;
And conquered kings, my factors. Now she's dead,
Let Caesar take the world,--
An empty circle, since the jewel's gone
Which made it worth my strife: my being's nauseous;
For all the bribes of life are gone away.

VENTIDIUS. Would you be taken?

ANTONY. Yes, I would be taken;
But, as a Roman ought,--dead, my Ventidius:
For I'll convey my soul from Caesar's reach,
And lay down life myself. 'Tis time the world
Should have a lord, and know whom to obey.
We two have kept its homage in suspense,
And bent the globe, on whose each side we trod,
Till it was dented inwards. Let him walk

Alone upon't: I'm weary of my part.
My torch is out; and the world stands before me,
Like a black desert at the approach of night:
I'll lay me down, and stray no farther on.

VENTIDIUS. I could be grieved,
But that I'll not outlive you: choose your death;
For, I have seen him in such various shapes,
I care not which I take: I'm only troubled,
The life I bear is worn to such a rag,
'Tis scarce worth giving. I could wish, indeed,
We threw it from us with a better grace;
That, like two lions taken in the toils,
We might at last thrust out our paws, and wound
The hunters that inclose us.

ANTONY. I have thought on it.
Ventidius, you must live.

VENTIDIUS. I must not, sir.

ANTONY. Wilt thou not live, to speak some good of me?
To stand by my fair fame, and guard the approaches
From the ill tongues of men?

VENTIDIUS. Who shall guard mine,
For living after you?

ANTONY. Say, I command it.

VENTIDIUS. If we die well, our deaths will speak themselves
And need no living witness.

ANTONY. Thou hast loved me,
And fain I would reward thee. I must die;
Kill me, and take the merit of my death,
To make thee friends with Caesar.

VENTIDIUS. Thank your kindness.
You said I loved you; and in recompense,
You bid me turn a traitor: Did I think
You would have used me thus?--that I should die
With a hard thought of you?

ANTONY. Forgive me, Roman.
Since I have heard of Cleopatra's death,
My reason bears no rule upon my tongue,
But lets my thoughts break all at random out.
I've thought better; do not deny me twice.

VENTIDIUS. By Heaven I will not.
Let it not be to outlive you.

ANTONY. Kill me first,
And then die thou; for 'tis but just thou serve
Thy friend, before thyself.

VENTIDIUS. Give me your hand.
We soon shall meet again. Now, farewell, emperor!--
[Embrace.]

Methinks that word's too cold to be my last:
Since death sweeps all distinctions, farewell, friend!
That's all--
I will not make a business of a trifle;
And yet I cannot look on you, and kill you;
Pray turn your face.

ANTONY. I do: strike home, be sure.

VENTIDIUS. Home as my sword will reach.
[Kills himself.]

ANTONY. Oh, thou mistak'st;
That wound was not of thine; give it me back:
Thou robb'st me of my death.

VENTIDIUS. I do indeed;
But think 'tis the first time I e'er deceived you,
If that may plead my pardon.--And you, gods,
Forgive me, if you will; for I die perjured,
Rather than kill my friend.

[Dies.]

ANTONY. Farewell! Ever my leader, even in death!
My queen and thou have got the start of me,
And I'm the lag of honour.--Gone so soon?
Is Death no more? he used him carelessly,
With a familiar kindness: ere he knocked,
Ran to the door, and took him in his arms,
As who should say--You're welcome at all hours,
A friend need give no warning. Books had spoiled him;
For all the learned are cowards by profession.
'Tis not worth
My further thought; for death, for aught I know,
Is but to think no more. Here's to be satisfied.

[Falls on his sword.]

I've missed my heart. O unperforming hand!
Thou never couldst have erred in a worse time.

My fortune jades me to the last; and death,
Like a great man, takes state, and makes me wait
For my admittance.--

[Trampling within.]

Some, perhaps, from Caesar:
If he should find me living, and suspect
That I played booty with my life! I'll mend
My work, ere they can reach me.

[Rises upon his knees.]

Enter CLEOPATRA, CHARMION, and IRAS

CLEOPATRA. Where is my lord? where is he?

CHARMION. There he lies,
And dead Ventidius by him.

CLEOPATRA. My tears were prophets; I am come too late.
O that accursed Alexas!

[Runs to him.]

ANTONY. Art thou living?
Or am I dead before I knew, and thou
The first kind ghost that meets me?

CLEOPATRA. Help me seat him.
Send quickly, send for help!
[They place him in a chair.]

ANTONY. I am answered.
We live both. Sit thee down, my Cleopatra:
I'll make the most I can of life, to stay
A moment more with thee.

CLEOPATRA. How is it with you?

ANTONY. 'Tis as with a man
Removing in a hurry; all packed up,
But one dear jewel that his haste forgot;
And he, for that, returns upon the spur:
So I come back for thee.

CLEOPATRA. Too long, ye heavens, you have been cruel to me:
Now show your mended faith, and give me back
His fleeting life!

ANTONY. It will not be, my love;
I keep my soul by force.
Say but, thou art not false.

CLEOPATRA. 'Tis now too late
To say I'm true: I'll prove it, and die with you.
Unknown to me, Alexas feigned my death:
Which, when I knew, I hasted to prevent
This fatal consequence. My fleet betrayed
Both you and me.

ANTONY. And Dolabella--

CLEOPATRA. Scarce
Esteemed before he loved; but hated now.

ANTONY. Enough: my life's not long enough for more.
Thou say'st, thou wilt come after: I believe thee;
For I can now believe whate'er thou sayest,
That we may part more kindly.

CLEOPATRA. I will come:
Doubt not, my life, I'll come, and quickly too:
Caesar shall triumph o'er no part of thee.

ANTONY. But grieve not, while thou stayest,
My last disastrous times:
Think we have had a clear and glorious day
And Heaven did kindly to delay the storm,
Just till our close of evening. Ten years' love,
And not a moment lost, but all improved
To the utmost joys,--what ages have we lived?
And now to die each other's; and, so dying,
While hand in hand we walk in groves below,
Whole troops of lovers' ghosts shall flock about us,
And all the train be ours.

CLEOPATRA. Your words are like the notes of dying swans,
Too sweet to last. Were there so many hours
For your unkindness, and not one for love?

ANTONY. No, not a minute.--This one kiss--more worth
Than all I leave to Caesar.

[Dies.]

CLEOPATRA. O tell me so again,
And take ten thousand kisses for that word.
My lord, my lord! speak, if you yet have being;
Sign to me, if you cannot speak; or cast
One look! Do anything that shows you live.

IRAS. He's gone too far to hear you;

And this you see, a lump of senseless clay,
The leavings of a soul.

CHARMION. Remember, madam,
He charged you not to grieve.

CLEOPATRA. And I'll obey him.
I have not loved a Roman, not to know
What should become his wife; his wife, my Charmion!
For 'tis to that high title I aspire;
And now I'll not die less. Let dull Octavia
Survive, to mourn him dead: My nobler fate
Shall knit our spousals with a tie, too strong
For Roman laws to break.

IRAS. Will you then die?

CLEOPATRA. Why shouldst thou make that question?

IRAS. Caesar is merciful.

CLEOPATRA. Let him be so
To those that want his mercy: My poor lord
Made no such covenant with him, to spare me
When he was dead. Yield me to Caesar's pride?
What! to be led in triumph through the streets,
A spectacle to base plebeian eyes;
While some dejected friend of Antony's,
Close in a corner, shakes his head, and mutters
A secret curse on her who ruined him!
I'll none of that.

CHARMION. Whatever you resolve,
I'll follow, even to death.

IRAS. I only feared
For you; but more should fear to live without you.

CLEOPATRA. Why, now, 'tis as it should be. Quick, my friends,
Despatch; ere this, the town's in Caesar's hands:
My lord looks down concerned, and fears my stay,
Lest I should be surprised;
Keep him not waiting for his love too long.
You, Charmion, bring my crown and richest jewels;
With them, the wreath of victory I made
(Vain augury!) for him, who now lies dead:
You, Iras, bring the cure of all our ills.

IRAS. The aspics, madam?

CLEOPATRA. Must I bid you twice?

[Exit CHARMION and IRAS.]

'Tis sweet to die, when they would force life on me,
To rush into the dark abode of death,
And seize him first; if he be like my love,
He is not frightful, sure.
We're now alone, in secrecy and silence;
And is not this like lovers? I may kiss
These pale, cold lips; Octavia does not see me:
And, oh! 'tis better far to have him thus,
Than see him in her arms.--Oh, welcome, welcome!

Enter CHARMION and IRAS

CHARMION. What must be done?

CLEOPATRA. Short ceremony, friends;
But yet it must be decent. First, this laurel
Shall crown my hero's head: he fell not basely,
Nor left his shield behind him.--Only thou
Couldst triumph o'er thyself; and thou alone
Wert worthy so to triumph.

CHARMION. To what end
These ensigns of your pomp and royalty?

CLEOPATRA. Dull, that thou art! why 'tis to meet my love;
As when I saw him first, on Cydnus' bank,
All sparkling, like a goddess: so adorned,
I'll find him once again; my second spousals
Shall match my first in glory. Haste, haste, both,
And dress the bride of Antony.

CHARMION. 'Tis done.

CLEOPATRA. Now seat me by my lord. I claim this place,
For I must conquer Caesar too, like him,
And win my share of the world.--Hail, you dear relics
Of my immortal love!
O let no impious hand remove you hence:
But rest for ever here! Let Egypt give
His death that peace, which it denied his life.--
Reach me the casket.

IRAS. Underneath the fruit
The aspic lies.

CLEOPATRA. Welcome, thou kind deceiver!

[Putting aside the leaves.]

Thou best of thieves: who, with an easy key,
Dost open life, and, unperceived by us,
Even steal us from ourselves; discharging so
Death's dreadful office, better than himself;
Touching our limbs so gently into slumber,
That Death stands by, deceived by his own image,
And thinks himself but sleep.

SERAPION. The queen, where is she?

[Within.]

The town is yielded, Caesar's at the gates.

CLEOPATRA. He comes too late to invade the rights of death!
Haste, bare my arm, and rouse the serpent's fury.

[Holds out her arm, and draws it back.]

Coward flesh,
Wouldst thou conspire with Caesar to betray me,
As thou wert none of mine? I'll force thee to it,
And not be sent by him,
But bring, myself, my soul to Antony.

[Turns aside, and then shows her arm bloody.]

Take hence; the work is done.

SERAPION. Break ope the door,

[Within.]

And guard the traitor well.

CHARMION. The next is ours.

IRAS. Now, Charmion, to be worthy
Of our great queen and mistress.

[They apply the aspics.]

CLEOPATRA. Already, death, I feel thee in my veins:
I go with such a will to find my lord,
That we shall quickly meet.
A heavy numbness creeps through every limb,
And now 'tis at my head: My eyelids fall,
And my dear love is vanquished in a mist.
Where shall I find him, where? O turn me to him,
And lay me on his breast!--Caesar, thy worst;
Now part us, if thou canst.

[Dies.]

[IRAS sinks down at her feet, and dies;

CHARMION stands behind her chair, as dressing her head.]

Enter SERAPION, two PRIESTS, ALEXAS bound, EGYPTIANS

PRIEST. Behold, Serapion,
What havoc death has made!

SERAPION. 'Twas what I feared.--
Charmion, is this well done?

CHARMION. Yes, 'tis well done, and like a queen, the last
Of her great race: I follow her.

[Sinks down: dies.]

ALEXAS. 'Tis true,
She has done well: Much better thus to die,
Than live to make a holiday in Rome.

SERAPION. See how the lovers sit in state together,
As they were giving laws to half mankind!
The impression of a smile, left in her face,
Shows she died pleased with him for whom she lived,
And went to charm him in another world.
Caesar's just entering: grief has now no leisure.
Secure that villain, as our pledge of safety,
To grace the imperial triumph.--Sleep, blest pair,
Secure from human chance, long ages out,
While all the storms of fate fly o'er your tomb;
And fame to late posterity shall tell,
No lovers lived so great, or died so well.

[Exeunt.]

EPILOGUE

Poets, like disputants, when reasons fail,
Have one sure refuge left--and that's to rail.
Fop, coxcomb, fool, are thundered through the pit;
And this is all their equipage of wit.
We wonder how the devil this difference grows
Betwixt our fools in verse, and yours in prose:
For, 'faith, the quarrel rightly understood,
'Tis civil war with their own flesh and blood.
The threadbare author hates the gaudy coat;
And swears at the gilt coach, but swears afoot:
For 'tis observed of every scribbling man,
He grows a fop as fast as e'er he can;
Prunes up, and asks his oracle, the glass,
If pink or purple best become his face.
For our poor wretch, he neither rails nor prays;
Nor likes your wit just as you like his plays;
He has not yet so much of Mr. Bayes.

He does his best; and if he cannot please,
Would quietly sue out his WRIT OF EASE.
Yet, if he might his own grand jury call,
By the fair sex he begs to stand or fall.
Let Caesar's power the men's ambition move,
But grace you him who lost the world for love!

Yet if some antiquated lady say,
The last age is not copied in his play;
Heaven help the man who for that face must drudge,
Which only has the wrinkles of a judge.
Let not the young and beauteous join with those;
For should you raise such numerous hosts of foes,
Young wits and sparks he to his aid must call;
'Tis more than one man's work to please you all.

End

POEMS BY T. H. W. ARMSTRONG (_KEBLE_)

HERITAGE

Here in my glass is blood of kings,
The life-blood of a race that lies
Long dead. The jewels burning in your rings
Are an Egyptian woman's eyes.

Your beads are dead bones; even my breath
Breathes hot words that were others' pain.
Now these fair things are ours awhile, till death
Brings us to quiet sleep again.

Then we shall put our love aside
For lovers of a later birth,
And leave to them this body's fragrant pride,

For jewels, in the heart of earth.

WATCHING

Midnight at last! And you, I know,
Are sleeping there
Peaceful. Stars keep
Great guard upon you. Calm, and still, and white
You are. One moment all your pale swift hair
Is quiet as the night.

Here in this mud, this beastliness
Of war, the thought
Of your soft sleep
Soothes a tired mind as a rare ointment may
Comfort a wound, sweet-scented ointment brought
From strange lands, far away.

LONELINESS

I watched the moon behind the trees
Float in a sea of sky.
The aspen whispers in the breeze,
The rest is silence now. And I
Can feel my loneliness around
Me fall. No human face
There is. None speaks. Never a sound
Save whispering leaves in this still place.

I have two friends, and they are dead,
Perhaps about their graves
Are trees that whisper overhead,
While in the grass the nettle waves.

THE STAR-SPLITTER

“You know Orion always comes up sideways.
Throwing a leg up over our fence of mountains,
And rising on his hands, he looks in on me
Busy outdoors by lantern-light with something
I should have done by daylight, and indeed,
After the ground is frozen, I should have done
Before it froze, and a gust flings a handful
Of waste leaves at my smoky lantern chimney
To make fun of my way of doing things,
Or else fun of Orion’s having caught me.
Has a man, I should like to ask, no rights
These forces are obliged to pay respect to?”
So Brad McLaughlin mingled reckless talk
Of heavenly stars with hugger-mugger farming,
Till having failed at hugger-mugger farming,
He burned his house down for the fire insurance
And spent the proceeds on a telescope
To satisfy a life-long curiosity
About our place among the infinities.

“What do you want with one of those blame things?”
I asked him well beforehand. “Don’t you get one!”
“Don’t call it blamed; there isn’t anything
More blameless in the sense of being less
A weapon in our human fight,” he said.
“I’ll have one if I sell my farm to buy it.”
There where he moved the rocks to plow the ground
And plowed between the rocks he couldn’t move
Few farms changed hands; so rather than spend years
Trying to sell his farm and then not selling,
He burned his house down for the fire insurance
And bought the telescope with what it came to.
He had been heard to say by several:
“The best thing that we’re put here for’s to see;
The strongest thing that’s given us to see with’s
A telescope. Someone in every town
Seems to me owes it to the town to keep one.
In Littleton it may as well be me.”
After such loose talk it was no surprise
When he did what he did and burned his house down.

Mean laughter went about the town that day
To let him know we weren’t the least imposed on,
And he could wait—we’d see to him to-morrow.
But the first thing next morning we reflected

If one by one we counted people out
For the least sin, it wouldn't take us long
To get so we had no one left to live with.
For to be social is to be forgiving.
Our thief, the one who does our stealing from us,
We don't cut off from coming to church suppers,
But what we miss we go to him and ask for.
He promptly gives it back, that is if still
Uneaten, unworn out, or undisposed of.
It wouldn't do to be too hard on Brad
About his telescope. Beyond the age
Of being given one's gift for Christmas,
He had to take the best way he knew how
To find himself in one. Well, all we said was
He took a strange thing to be roguish over.

Some sympathy was wasted on the house,
A good old-timer dating back along;
But a house isn't sentient; the house
Didn't feel anything. And if it did,
Why not regard it as a sacrifice,
And an old-fashioned sacrifice by fire,
Instead of a new-fashioned one at auction?

Out of a house and so out of a farm
At one stroke (of a match), Brad had to turn
To earn a living on the Concord railroad,
As under-ticket-agent at a station
Where his job, when he wasn't selling tickets,
Was setting out up track and down, not plants
As on a farm, but planets, evening stars
That varied in their hue from red to green.

He got a good glass for six hundred dollars.
His new job gave him leisure for star-gazing.
Often he bid me come and have a look
Up the brass barrel, velvet black inside,
At a star quaking in the other end.
I recollect a night of broken clouds
And underfoot snow melted down to ice,
And melting further in the wind to mud.
Bradford and I had out the telescope.
We spread our two legs as we spread its three,
Pointed our thoughts the way we pointed it,
And standing at our leisure till the day broke,
Said some of the best things we ever said.[19]
That telescope was christened the Star-splitter,
Because it didn't do a thing but split
A star in two or three the way you split

A globule of quicksilver in your hand
With one stroke of your finger in the middle.
It's a star-splitter if there ever was one
And ought to do some good if splitting stars
'Sa thing to be compared with splitting wood.

We've looked and looked, but after all where are we?
Do we know any better where we are,
And how it stands between the night to-night
And a man with a smoky lantern chimney?
How different from the way it ever stood?

The Project Gutenberg EBook of *New Hampshire, A Poem; with Notes and Grace Notes*, by Robert Frost

THE SONG OF THE SHIRT.

By Thomas Hood.

With fingers weary and worn,
With eyelids heavy and red,
A woman sat in unwomanly rags,
Plying her needle and thread—
Stitch! stitch! stitch!
In poverty, hunger and dirt,
And still with a voice of dolorous pitch
She sang the “Song of the Shirt!”

Work! work! work
While the cock is crowing aloof!
And work—work—work,
Till the stars shine through the roof!
It's oh! to be a slave
Along with the barbarous Turk,
Where a woman has never a soul to save,
If this is Christian work!

Work—work—work
Till the brain begins to swim;
Work—work—work
Till the eyes are heavy and dim!
Seam and gusset, and band,
Band and gusset and seam,
Till over the buttons I fall asleep,
And sew them on in a dream!

Oh, men, with sisters dear!
Oh, men, with mothers and wives!

It is not linen you're wearing out
But human creature's lives!
Stitch—stitch—stitch,
In poverty, hunger and dirt,
Sewing at once, with a double thread,
A shroud as well as a shirt.

A SEA SONG. BY ALLAN CUNNINGHAM.

“And who shall sing the glory of the deep” better than Allan Cunningham has done in this song of a sailor’s love, a poet’s love, for the sea?

A wet sheet and a flowing sea,
And a wind that follows fast,
And fills the white and rustling sail,
And bends the gallant mast;
And bends the gallant mast, my boys,
While, like the eagle free,
Away the good ship flies, and leaves
Old England on the lee.

Oh, for a soft and gentle wind!
I heard a fair one cry;
But give to me the snoring breeze
And white waves heaving high;
And white waves heaving high, my boys,
The good ship tight and free;
The world of waters is our home,
And merry men are we.

There’s tempest in yon horned moon,
And lightning in yon cloud;
And hark the music, mariners!
The wind is piping loud;
The wind is piping loud, my boys,
The lightning flashing free—
While the hollow oak our palace is,
Our heritage the sea.

AT THE CLOSED GATE OF JUSTICE

James D. Corrothers

To be a Negro in a day like this
Demands forgiveness. Bruised with blow on blow,
Betrayed, like him whose woe dimmed eyes gave bliss
Still must one succor those who brought one low,
To be a Negro in a day like this.

To be a Negro in a day like this
Demands rare patience--patience that can wait
In utter darkness. 'Tis the path to miss,
And knock, unheeded, at an iron gate,
To be a Negro in a day like this.

To be a Negro in a day like this
Demands strange loyalty. We serve a flag
Which is to us white freedom's emphasis.
Ah! one must love when Truth and Justice lag,
To be a Negro in a day like this.

To be a Negro in a day like this--
Alas! Lord God, what evil have we done?
Still shines the gate, all gold and amethyst,
But I pass by, the glorious goal unwon,
"Merely a Negro"--in a day like this!



TWO POEMS

William H.A. Moore

DUSK SONG

The garden is very quiet to-night,
The dusk has gone with the Evening Star,
And out on the bay a lone ship light
Makes a silver pathway over the bar
Where the sea sings low.

I follow the light with an earnest eye,
Creeping along to the thick far-away,
Until it fell in the depths of the deep, dark sky

With the haunting dream of the dusk of day
And its lovely glow.

Long nights, long nights and the whisperings of new ones,
Flame the line of the pathway down to the sea
With the halo of new dreams and the hallow of old ones,
And they bring magic light to my love reverie
And a lover's regret.

Tender sorrow for loss of a soft murmured word,
Tender measure of doubt in a faint, aching heart,
Tender listening for wind-songs in the tree heights heard
When you and I were of the dusks a part,
Are with me yet.

I pray for faith to the noble spirit of Space,
I sound the cosmic depths for the measure of glory
Which will bring to this earth the imperishable race
Of whom Beauty dreamed in the soul-toned story
The Prophets told.

Silence and love and deep wonder of stars
Dust-silver the heavens from west to east,
From south to north, and in a maze of bars
Invisible I wander far from the feast
As night grows old.

Half blind is my vision I know to the truth,
My ears are half deaf to the voice of the tear
That touches the silences as Autumn's ruth
Steals thru the dusks of each returning year
A goodly friend.

The Autumn, then Winter and wintertime's grief!
But the weight of the snow is the glistening gift
Which loving brings to the rose and its leaf,
For the days of the roses glow in the drift
And never end.

* * * *

The moon has come. Wan and pallid is she.
The spell of half memories, the touch of half tears,
And the wounds of worn passions she brings to me
With all the tremor of the far-off years
And their mad wrong.

Yet the garden is very quiet to-night,
The dusk has long gone with the Evening Star,

And out on the bay the moon's wan light
Lays a silver pathway beyond the bar,
Dear heart, pale and long.

IT WAS NOT FATE

It was not fate which overtook me,
Rather a wayward, wilful wind
That blew hot for awhile
And then, as the even shadows came, blew cold.
What pity it is that a man grown old in life's dreaming
Should stop, e'en for a moment, to look into a woman's eyes.
And I forgot!
Forgot that one's heart must be steeled against the east wind.
Life and death alike come out of the East:
Life as tender as young grass,
Death as dreadful as the sight of clotted blood.
I shall go back into the darkness,
Not to dream but to seek the light again.
I shall go by paths, mayhap,
On roads that wind around the foothills
Where the plains are bare and wild
And the passers-by come few and far between.
I want the night to be long, the moon blind,
The hills thick with moving memories,
And my heart beating a breathless requiem
For all the dead days I have lived.
When the Dawn comes--Dawn, deathless, dreaming--
I shall will that my soul must be cleansed of hate,
I shall pray for strength to hold children close to my heart,
I shall desire to build houses where the poor will know shelter, comfort,
beauty.
And then may I look into a woman's eyes
And find holiness, love and the peace which passeth understanding.

WURZEL-FLUMMERY[34]

A COMEDY IN ONE ACT

By A. A. MILNE

[Footnote 34: Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that this play is fully copyrighted under the existing laws of the United States, and no one is allowed to produce this play without first having obtained permission of Samuel French, 28 West 28 Street, New York.]

Alan Alexander Milne was born January 18, 1882. He was a student at Westminster School, the library of which is familiar ground to every reader of Irving's Sketch Book. From there he proceeded to Trinity College, Cambridge. On his graduation, he went into journalism in London. He was assistant editor of Punch from 1906 to 1914. During the War he was a lieutenant in the Fourth Royal Warwickshire Regiment. In the introduction to his volume of First Plays, in which

Wurzel-Flummery appears, he gives the following whimsical account of his career as a dramatist: "These five plays [The Lucky One, The Boy Comes Home, Belinda, The Red Feather, Wurzel-Flummery] were written in the order in which they appear now, during the years 1916 and 1917. They would hardly have been written had it not been for the War, although only one of them is concerned with that subject. To his other responsibilities the Kaiser now adds this volume.

"For these plays were not the work of a professional writer, but the recreation of a (temporary) professional soldier. Play-writing is a luxury to a journalist, as insidious as golf and much more expensive in time and money. When an article is written, the financial reward (and we may as well live as not) is a matter of certainty. A novelist, too, even if he is not in 'the front rank'--but I never heard of one who wasn't--can at least be sure of publication. But when a play is written, there is no certainty of anything save disillusionment.

"To write a play, then, while I was a journalist seemed to me a depraved proceeding, almost as bad as going to Lord's in the morning. I thought I could write one (we all think we can), but I could not afford so unpromising a gamble. But once in the Army the case was altered. No duty now urged me to write. My job was soldiering, and my spare time was my own affair. Other subalterns played bridge and golf; that was one way of amusing oneself. Another way was--why not?--to write plays.

"So we began with Wurzel-Flummery. I say 'we,' because another is

mixed up in this business even more seriously than the Kaiser. She wrote; I dictated. And if a particularly fine evening drew us out for a walk along the byways--where there was no saluting, and one could smoke a pipe without shocking the Duke of Cambridge--then it was to discuss the last scene and to wonder what would happen in the next. We did not estimate the money or publicity which might come from this new venture; there has never been any serious thought of making money by my bridge-playing, nor desire for publicity when I am trying to play golf. But secretly, of course, we hoped. It was that which made it so much more exciting than any other game.

"Our hopes were realized to the following extent:

"Wurzel-Flummery was produced by Mr. Dion Boucicault at the New Theatre in April, 1917. It was originally written in three acts, in which form it was shown to one or two managers. At the beginning of 1917 I was offered the chance of production in a triple bill if I cut it down into a two-act play. To cut even a line is painful, but to cut thirty pages of one's first comedy, slaughtering whole characters on the way, has at least a certain morbid fascination. It appeared, therefore, in two acts; and one kindly critic embarrassed us by saying that a lesser artist would have written it in three acts, and most of the other critics annoyed us by saying that a greater artist would have written it in one act. However, I amused myself some months later by slaying another character--the office-boy, no less--thereby getting it down to one act, and was surprised to find that the one-act version was, after all, the best.... At least, I think it is.... At any rate, that is the version I am printing here; but, as can be imagined, I am rather tired of the whole business by now, and I am beginning to wonder if anyone ever did take the name of Wurzel-Flummery at all. Possibly the whole thing is an invention."

Wurzel-Flummery was first produced in this country at the Arts and Crafts Theatre in Detroit; recently it was acted again by The Players of St. Louis.

WURZEL-FLUMMERY

CHARACTERS

ROBERT CRAWSHAW, M.P.
MARGARET CRAWSHAW (his wife).
VIOLA CRAWSHAW (his daughter).
RICHARD MERITON, M.P.
DENIS CLIFTON.

SCENE.--ROBERT CRAWSHAW's town house. Morning.

It is a June day before the War in the morning-room of ROBERT CRAWSHAW's town house. Entering it with our friend the house-agent, our attention would first be called to the delightful club fender round the fireplace. On one side of this a Chesterfield sofa comes out at right angles. In a corner of the sofa MISS VIOLA CRAWSHAW is sitting, deep in "The Times." The house-agent would hesitate to catalogue her, but we notice for ourselves, before he points out the comfortable armchair opposite, that she is young and pretty. In the middle of the room and facing the fireplace is (observe) a solid knee-hole writing-table, covered with papers and books of reference, and supported by a chair at the middle and another at the side. The rest of the furniture, and the books and pictures round the walls, we must leave until another time, for at this moment the door behind the sofa opens and RICHARD MERITON comes in. He looks about thirty-five, has a clean-shaven intelligent face, and is dressed in a dark tweed suit. We withdraw hastily, as he comes behind VIOLA and puts his hands over her eyes.

RICHARD. Three guesses who it is.

VIOLA [putting her hands over his]. The Archbishop of Canterbury.

RICHARD. No.

VIOLA. The Archbishop of York.

RICHARD. Fortunately that exhausts the archbishops. Now, then, your last guess.

VIOLA. Richard Meriton, M.P.

RICHARD. Wonderful! [He kisses the top of her head lightly and goes round to the club fender, where he sits with his back to the fireplace.] How did you know? [He begins to fill a pipe.]

VIOLA [smiling]. Well, it couldn't have been father.

RICHARD. N-no, I suppose not. Not just after breakfast anyway. Anything in the paper?

VIOLA. There's a letter from father pointing out that ----

RICHARD. I never knew such a man as Robert for pointing out.

VIOLA. Anyhow, it's in big print.

RICHARD. It would be.

VIOLA. You are very cynical this morning, Dick.

RICHARD. The sausages were cold, dear.

VIOLA. Poor Dick! Oh, Dick, I wish you were on the same side as father.

RICHARD. But he's on the wrong side. Surely I've told you that before.... Viola, do you really think it would make a difference?

VIOLA. Well, you know what he said about you at Basingstoke the other day.

RICHARD. No, I don't, really.

VIOLA. He said that your intellectual arrogance was only equaled by your spiritual instability. I don't quite know what it means, but it doesn't sound the sort of thing you want in a son-in-law.

RICHARD. Still, it was friendly of him to go right away to Basingstoke to say it. Anyhow, you don't believe it.

VIOLA. Of course not.

RICHARD. And Robert doesn't really.

VIOLA. Then why does he say it?

RICHARD. Ah, now you're opening up very grave questions. The whole structure of the British Constitution rests upon Robert's right to say things like that at Basingstoke.... But really, darling, we're very good friends. He's always asking my advice about things--he doesn't take it, of course, but still he asks it; and it was awfully good of him to insist on my staying here while my flat was being done up. [_ Seriously.] I bless him for that. If it hadn't been for the last week I should never have known you. You were just "Viola"--the girl I'd seen at odd times since she was a child; and now--oh, why won't you let me tell your father? I hate it like this.

VIOLA. Because I love you, Dick, and because I know father. He would, as they say in novels, show you the door. [_ Smiling.] And I want you this side of the door for a little bit longer.

RICHARD [_ firmly]. I shall tell him before I go.

VIOLA [_pleadingly_]. But not till then; that gives us two more days.
You see, darling, it's going to take me all I know to get round him.
You see, apart from politics you're so poor--and father hates poor
people.

RICHARD [_viciously_]. Damn money!

VIOLA [_thoughtfully_]. I think that's what father means by spiritual
instability.

RICHARD. Viola! [_He stands up and holds out his arms to her. She goes
to him and_] Oh, Lord, look out!

VIOLA [_reaching across to the mantelpiece_]. Matches?

RICHARD. Thanks very much. [_He lights his pipe as ROBERT CRAWSHAW
comes in. CRAWSHAW is forty-five, but his closely-trimmed mustache and
whiskers, his inclination to stoutness, and the loud old-gentlemanly
style in trousers which he affects with his morning-coat, make him
look older, and, what is more important, the Pillar of the State which
he undoubtedly is._]

CRAWSHAW. Good-morning, Richard. Down at last?

RICHARD. Good-morning. I did warn you, didn't I, that I was bad at
breakfasts?

CRAWSHAW. Viola, where's your mother?

VIOLA [_making for the door_]. I don't know, father; do you want her?

CRAWSHAW. I wish to speak to her.

VIOLA. All right, I'll tell her. [_She goes out. RICHARD picks up "The
Times" and sits down again._]

CRAWSHAW [_sitting down in a business-like way at his desk_]. Richard,
why don't you get something to do?

RICHARD. My dear fellow, I've only just finished breakfast.

CRAWSHAW. I mean generally. And apart, of course, from your--ah--work
in the House.

RICHARD [_a trifle cool_]. I have something to do.

CRAWSHAW. Oh, reviewing. I mean something serious. You should get a
directorship or something in the City.

RICHARD. I hate the City.

CRAWSHAW. Ah! there, my dear Richard, is that intellectual arrogance to which I had to call attention the other day at Basingstoke.

RICHARD [_dryly_]. Yes, so Viola was telling me.

CRAWSHAW. You understood, my dear fellow, that I meant nothing personal. [_Clearing his throat._] It is justly one of the proudest boasts of the Englishman that his political enmities are not allowed to interfere with his private friendships.

RICHARD [_carelessly_]. Oh, I shall go to Basingstoke myself one day.

Enter MARGARET. MARGARET has been in love with ROBERT CRAWSHAW for twenty-five years, the last twenty-four years from habit. She is small, comfortable, and rather foolish; you would certainly call her a dear, but you might sometimes call her a poor dear.

MARGARET. Good-morning, Mr. Meriton. I do hope your breakfast was all right.

RICHARD. Excellent, thank you.

MARGARET. That's right. Did you want me, Robert?

CRAWSHAW [_obviously uncomfortable_].
Yes--er--h'r'm--Richard--er--what are your--er--plans?

RICHARD. Is he trying to get rid of me, Mrs. Crawshaw?

MARGARET. Of course not. [_To ROBERT._] Are you, dear?

CRAWSHAW. Perhaps we had better come into my room, Margaret. We can leave Richard here with the paper.

RICHARD. No, no; I'm going.

CRAWSHAW [_going to the door with him_]. I have some particular business to discuss. If you aren't going out, I should like to consult you in the matter afterwards.

RICHARD. Right. [_He goes out._]

CRAWSHAW. Sit down, Margaret. I have some extraordinary news for you.

MARGARET [_sitting down_]. Yes, Robert?

CRAWSHAW. This letter has just come by hand. [_He reads it._] "199,

Lincoln's Inn Fields. Dear Sir, I have the pleasure to inform you that under the will of the late Mr. Antony Clifton you are a beneficiary to the extent of £50,000."

MARGARET. Robert!

CRAWSHAW. Wait! "A trifling condition is attached--namely, that you should take the name of--Wurzel-Flummery."

MARGARET. Robert!

CRAWSHAW. "I have the honor to be, your obedient servant, Denis Clifton." [_He folds the letter up and puts it away._]

MARGARET. Robert, whoever is he? I mean the one who's left you the money?

CRAWSHAW [_calmly_]. I have not the slightest idea, Margaret. Doubtless we shall find out before long. I have asked Mr. Denis Clifton to come and see me.

MARGARET. Leaving you fifty thousand pounds! Just fancy!

CRAWSHAW. Wurzel-Flummery!

MARGARET. We can have the second car now, dear, can't we? And what about moving? You know you always said you ought to be in a more central part. Mr. Robert Crawshaw, M.P., of Curzon Street sounds so much more--more Cabinety.

CRAWSHAW. Mr. Robert Wurzel-Flummery, M.P., of Curzon Street--I don't know what that sounds like.

MARGARET. I expect that's only a legal way of putting it, dear. They can't really expect us to change our name to--Wurzley-Fothergill.

CRAWSHAW. Wurzel-Flummery.

MARGARET. Yes, dear, didn't I say that? I am sure you could talk the solicitor round--this Mr. Denis Clifton. After all, it doesn't matter to him what we call ourselves. Write him one of your letters, dear.

CRAWSHAW. You don't seem to apprehend the situation, Margaret.

MARGARET. Yes, I do, dear. This Mr.--Mr.--

CRAWSHAW. Antony Clifton.

MARGARET. Yes, he's left you fifty thousand pounds, together with the

name of Wurzley-Fothergill--

CRAWSHAW. Wurzel--oh, well, never mind.

MARGARET. Yes, well, you tell the solicitor that you will take the fifty thousand pounds, but you don't want the name. It's too absurd, when everybody knows of Robert Crawshaw, M.P., to expect you to call yourself Wurzley-Fothergill.

CRAWSHAW [impatiently]. Yes, yes. The point is that this Mr. Clifton has left me the money on condition that I change my name. If I don't take the name, I don't take the money.

MARGARET. But is that legal?

CRAWSHAW. Perfectly. It is often done. People change their names on succeeding to some property.

MARGARET. I thought it was only when your name was Moses and you changed it to Talbot.

CRAWSHAW [to himself]. Wurzel-Flummery!

MARGARET. I wonder why he left you the money at all. Of course it was very nice of him, but if you didn't know him--Why do you think he did, dear?

CRAWSHAW. I know no more than this letter. I suppose he had--ah--followed my career, and was--ah--interested in it, and being a man with no relations, felt that he could--ah--safely leave this money to me. No doubt Wurzel-Flummery was his mother's maiden name, or the name of some other friend even dearer to him; he wished the name--ah--perpetuated, perhaps even recorded not unworthily in the history of our country, and--ah--made this will accordingly. In a way it is a kind of--ah--sacred trust.

MARGARET. Then, of course, you'll accept it, dear?

CRAWSHAW. It requires some consideration. I have my career to think about, my duty to my country.

MARGARET. Of course, dear. Money is a great help in politics, isn't it?

CRAWSHAW. Money wisely spent is a help in any profession. The view of riches which socialists and suchlike people profess to take is entirely ill-considered. A rich man, who spends his money thoughtfully, is serving his country as nobly as anybody.

MARGARET. Yes, dear. Then you think we could have that second car and the house in Curzon Street?

CRAWSHAW. We must not be led away. Fifty thousand pounds, properly invested, is only two thousand a year. When you have deducted the income-tax--and the tax on unearned income is extremely high just now--

MARGARET. Oh, but surely if we have to call ourselves Wurzel-Flummery it would count as earned income.

CRAWSHAW. I fear not. Strictly speaking, all money is earned. Even if it is left to you by another, it is presumably left to you in recognition of certain outstanding qualities which you possess. But Parliament takes a different view. I do not for a moment say that fifty thousand pounds would not be welcome. Fifty thousand pounds is certainly not to be sneezed at--

MARGARET. I should think not, indeed!

CRAWSHAW [unconsciously rising from his chair]. And without this preposterous condition attached I should be pleased to accept this trust, and I would endeavor, Mr. Speaker--[He sits down again suddenly.] I would endeavor, Margaret, to carry it out to the best of my poor ability. But--Wurzel-Flummery!

MARGARET. You would soon get used to it, dear. I had to get used to the name of Crawshaw after I had been Debenham for twenty-five years. It is surprising how quickly it comes to you. I think I only signed my name Margaret Debenham once after I was married.

CRAWSHAW [kindly]. The cases are rather different, Margaret. Naturally a woman, who from her cradle looks forward to the day when she will change her name, cannot have this feeling for the--ah--honor of his name, which every man--ah--feels. Such a feeling is naturally more present in my own case since I have been privileged to make the name of Crawshaw in some degree--ah--well-known, I might almost say famous.

MARGARET [wistfully]. I used to be called "the beautiful Miss Debenham of Leamington." Everybody in Leamington knew of me. Of course, I am very proud to be Mrs. Robert Crawshaw.

CRAWSHAW [getting up and walking over to the fireplace]. In a way it would mean beginning all over again. It is half the battle in politics to get your name before the public. "Whoever is this man Wurzel-Flummery?" people will say.

MARGARET. Anyhow, dear, let us look on the bright side. Fifty thousand

pounds is fifty thousand pounds.

CRAWSHAW. It is, Margaret. And no doubt it is my duty to accept it. But--well, all I say is that a gentleman would have left it without any conditions. Or at least he would merely have expressed his wish that I should take the name, without going so far as to enforce it. Then I could have looked at the matter all round in an impartial spirit.

MARGARET [pursuing her thoughts]. The linen is marked R. M. C. now. Of course, we should have to have that altered. Do you think R. M. F. would do, or would it have to be R. M. W. hyphen F.?

CRAWSHAW. What? Oh--yes, there will be a good deal of that to attend to. [Going up to her.] I think, Margaret, I had better talk to Richard about this. Of course, it would be absurd to refuse the money, but--well, I should like to have his opinion.

MARGARET [getting up]. Do you think he would be very sympathetic, dear? He makes jokes about serious things--like bishops and hunting--just as if they weren't at all serious.

CRAWSHAW. I wish to talk to him just to obtain a new--ah--point of view. I do not hold myself in the least bound to act on anything he says. I regard him as a constituent, Margaret.

MARGARET. Then I will send him to you.

CRAWSHAW [putting his hands on her shoulders]. Margaret, what do you really feel about it?

MARGARET. Just whatever you feel, Robert.

CRAWSHAW [kissing her]. Thank you, Margaret; you are a good wife to me. [She goes out.] CRAWSHAW goes to his desk and selects a "Who's Who" from a little pile of reference-books on it. He walks round to his chair, sits down in it and begins to turn the pages, murmuring names beginning with "C" to himself as he gets near the place. When he finds it, he murmurs "Clifton--that's funny" and closes the book. Evidently the publishers have failed him.]

Enter RICHARD.

RICHARD. Well, what's the news? [He goes to his old seat on the fender.] Been left a fortune?

CRAWSHAW [simply]. Yes.... By a Mr. Antony Clifton. I never met him and I know nothing about him.

RICHARD [_surprised_]. Not really? Well, I congratulate you. [_He sighs._] To them that hath--But what on earth do you want my advice about?

CRAWSHAW. There is a slight condition attached.

RICHARD. Oho!

CRAWSHAW. The condition is that with this money--fifty thousand pounds--I take the name of--ah--Wurzel-Flummery.

RICHARD [_jumping up_]. What!

CRAWSHAW [_sulkily_]. I said it quite distinctly--Wurzel-Flummery. [_RICHARD in an awed silence walks over to the desk and stands looking down at the unhappy CRAWSHAW. He throws out his left hand as if introducing him._]

RICHARD [_reverently_]. Mr. Robert Wurzel-Flummery, M.P., one of the most prominent of our younger Parliamentarians. Oh, you ... oh!... oh, how too heavenly! [_He goes back to his seat, looks up and catches CRAWSHAW's eye, and breaks down altogether._]

CRAWSHAW [_rising with dignity_]. Shall we discuss it seriously, or shall we leave it?

RICHARD. How can we discuss a name like Wurzel-Flummery seriously? "Mr. Wurzel-Flummery in a few well-chosen words seconded the motion." ... "'Sir,' went on Mr. Wurzel-Flummery"--Oh, poor Robert!

CRAWSHAW [_sitting down sulkily_]. You seem quite certain that I shall take the money.

RICHARD. I am quite certain.

CRAWSHAW. Would you take it?

RICHARD [_hesitating_]. Well--I wonder.

CRAWSHAW. After all, as William Shakespeare says, "What's in a name?"

RICHARD. I can tell you something else that Shakespeare--William Shakespeare--said. [_Dramatically rising._] Who steals my purse with fifty thousand in it--steals trash. [_In his natural voice._] Trash, Robert. [_Dramatically again._] But he who filches from me my good name of Crawshaw [_lightly_] and substitutes the rotten one of Wurzel--

CRAWSHAW [_annoyed_]. As a matter of fact, Wurzel-Flummery is a very

good old name. I seem to remember some--ah--Hampshire Wurzel-Flummeries. It is a very laudable spirit on the part of a dying man to wish to--ah--perpetuate these old English names. It all seems to me quite natural and straightforward. If I take this money I shall have nothing to be ashamed of.

RICHARD. I see.... Look here, may I ask you a few questions? I should like to know just how you feel about the whole business?

CRAWSHAW [_complacently folding his hands_]. Go ahead.

RICHARD. Suppose a stranger came up in the street to you and said, "My poor man, here's five pounds for you," what would you do? Tell him to go to the devil, I suppose, wouldn't you?

CRAWSHAW [_humorously_]. In more parliamentary language, perhaps, Richard. I should tell him I never took money from strangers.

RICHARD. Quite so; but that if it were ten thousand pounds, you would take it?

CRAWSHAW. I most certainly shouldn't.

RICHARD. But if he died and left it to you, _then_ you would?

CRAWSHAW [_blandly_]. Ah, I thought you were leading up to that. That, of course, is entirely different.

RICHARD. Why?

CRAWSHAW. Well--ah--wouldn't you take ten thousand pounds if it were left to you by a stranger?

RICHARD. I daresay I should. But I should like to know why it would seem different.

CRAWSHAW [_professionally_]. Ha--hum! Well--in the first place, when a man is dead he wants his money no longer. You can therefore be certain that you are not taking anything from him which he cannot spare. And in the next place, it is the man's dying wish that you should have the money. To refuse would be to refuse the dead. To accept becomes almost a sacred duty.

RICHARD. It really comes to this, doesn't it? You won't take it from him when he's alive, because if you did, you couldn't decently refuse him a little gratitude; but you know that it doesn't matter a damn to him what happens to his money after he's dead, and therefore you can take it without feeling any gratitude at all.

CRAWSHAW. No, I shouldn't put it like that.

RICHARD [_smiling_]. I'm sure you wouldn't, Robert.

CRAWSHAW. No doubt you can twist it about so that--

RICHARD. All right, we'll leave that and go on to the next point. Suppose a perfect stranger offered you five pounds to part your hair down the middle, shave off your mustache, and wear only one whisker--if he met you suddenly in the street, seemed to dislike your appearance, took out a fiver and begged you to hurry off and alter yourself--of course you'd pocket the money and go straight to your barber's?

CRAWSHAW. Now you are merely being offensive.

RICHARD. I beg your pardon. I should have said that if he had left you five pounds in his will?--well, then twenty pounds?--a hundred pounds?--a thousand pounds?--fifty thousand pounds?--[Jumping up excitedly.] It's only a question of price--fifty thousand pounds, Robert--a pink tie with purple spots, hair parted across the back, trousers with a patch in the seat, call myself Wurzel-Flummery--any old thing you like, you can't insult me--anything you like, gentlemen, for fifty thousand pounds. [Lowering his voice.] Only you must leave it in your will, and then I can feel that it is a sacred duty--a sacred duty, my lords and gentlemen. [He sinks back into the sofa and relights his pipe.]

CRAWSHAW [_rising with dignity_]. It is evidently useless to prolong this conversation.

RICHARD [_waving him down again_]. No, no, Robert; I've finished. I just took the other side--and I got carried away. I ought to have been at the Bar.

CRAWSHAW. You take such extraordinary views of things. You must look facts in the face, Richard. This is a modern world, and we are modern people living in it. Take the matter-of-fact view. You may like or dislike the name of--ah--Wurzel-Flummery, but you can't get away from the fact that fifty thousand pounds is not to be sneezed at.

RICHARD [_wistfully_]. I don't know why people shouldn't sneeze at money sometimes. I should like to start a society for sneezing at fifty thousand pounds. We'd have to begin in a small way, of course; we'd begin by sneezing at five pounds--and work up.... The trouble is that we're all inoculated in our cradles against that kind of cold.

CRAWSHAW [_pleasantly_]. You will have your little joke. But you know as well as I do that it is only a joke. There can be no serious reason

why I should not take this money. And I--ah--gather that you don't think it will affect my career?

RICHARD [_ carelessly _]. Not a bit. It'll help it. It'll get you into all the comic papers.

MARGARET _comes in at this moment, to the relief of CRAWSHAW, who is not quite certain if he is being flattered or insulted again._

MARGARET. Well, have you told him?

RICHARD [_ making way for her on the sofa _]. I have heard the news, Mrs. Crawshaw. And I have told Robert my opinion that he should have no difficulty in making the name of Wurzel-Flummery as famous as he has already made that of Crawshaw. At any rate I hope he will.

MARGARET. How nice of you!

CRAWSHAW. Well, it's settled then. [_ Looking at his watch. _] This solicitor fellow should be here soon. Perhaps, after all, we can manage something about--Ah, Viola, did you want your mother?

Enter VIOLA.

VIOLA. Sorry, do I interrupt a family meeting? There's Richard, so it can't be very serious.

RICHARD. What a reputation!

CRAWSHAW. Well, it's over now.

MARGARET. Viola had better know, hadn't she?

CRAWSHAW. She'll have to know some time, of course.

VIOLA [_sitting down firmly on the sofa_]. Of course she will. So you'd better tell her now. I knew there was something exciting going on this morning.

CRAWSHAW [_embarrassed_]. Hum--ha--[_ To MARGARET. _] Perhaps you'd better tell her, dear.

MARGARET [_simply and naturally_]. Father has come into some property, Viola. It means changing our name unfortunately. But your father doesn't think it will matter.

VIOLA. How thrilling! What is the name, mother?

MARGARET. Your father says it is--dear me, I shall never remember it.

CRAWSHAW [_mumbling_]. Wurzel-Flummery.

VIOLA [_after a pause_]. Dick, you tell me, if nobody else will.

RICHARD. Robert said it just now.

VIOLA. That wasn't a name, was it? I thought it was just a--do say it again, father.

CRAWSHAW [_sulkily but plainly_]. Wurzel-Flummery.

VIOLA [_surprised_]. Do you spell it like that? I mean like a wurzel and like flummery?

RICHARD. Exactly, I believe.

VIOLA [_to herself_]. Miss Viola Wurzel-Flummery--I mean they'd have to look at you, wouldn't they? [_Bubbling over._] Oh, Dick, what a heavenly name! Who had it first?

RICHARD. They are an old Hampshire family--that is so, isn't it, Robert?

CRAWSHAW [_annoyed_]. I said I thought that I remembered--Margaret, can you find Burke there? [_She finds it, and he buries himself in the families of the great._]

MARGARET. Well, Viola, you haven't told us how you like being Miss Wurzel-Flummery.

VIOLA. I haven't realized myself yet, mummy. I shall have to stand in front of my glass and tell myself who I am.

RICHARD. It's all right for you. You know you'll change your name one day, and then it won't matter what you've been called before.

VIOLA [_secretly_]. H'sh! [_She smiles lovingly at him, and then says aloud._] Oh, won't it? It's got to appear in the papers, "A marriage has been arranged between Miss Viola Wurzel-Flummery ..." and everybody will say, "And about time too, poor girl."

MARGARET [_to CRAWSHAW_]. Have you found it, dear?

CRAWSHAW [_resentfully_]. This is the 1912 edition.

MARGARET. Still, dear, if it's a very old family, it ought to be in by then.

VIOLA. I don't mind how old it is; I think it's lovely. Oh, Dick, what fun it will be being announced! Just think of the footman throwing open the door and saying--

MAID [_announcing_]. Mr. Denis Clifton. [_There is a little natural confusion as CLIFTON enters jauntily in his summer suiting with a bundle of papers under his arm. CRAWSHAW goes towards him and shakes hands._]

CRAWSHAW. How do you do, Mr. Clifton? Very good of you to come. [_Looking doubtfully at his clothes._] Er--it is Mr. Denis Clifton, the solicitor?

CLIFTON [_cheerfully_]. It is. I must apologize for not looking the part more, but my clothes did not arrive from Clarkson's in time. Very careless of them when they had promised. And my clerk dissuaded me from the side-whiskers which I keep by me for these occasions.

CRAWSHAW [_bewildered_]. Ah yes, quite so. But you have--ah--full legal authority to act in this matter?

CLIFTON. Oh, decidedly. Oh, there's no question of that.

CRAWSHAW [_introducing_]. My wife--and daughter. [_CLIFTON bows gracefully._] My friend, Mr. Richard Meriton.

CLIFTON [_happily_]. Dear me! Mr. Meriton too! This is quite a situation, as we say in the profession.

RICHARD [_amused by him_]. In the legal profession?

CLIFTON. In the theatrical profession. [_Turning to MARGARET._] I am a writer of plays, Mrs. Crawshaw. I am not giving away a professional secret when I tell you that most of the managers in London have thanked me for submitting my work to them.

CRAWSHAW [_firmly_]. I understood, Mr. Clifton, that you were the solicitor employed to wind up the affairs of the late Mr. Antony Clifton.

CLIFTON. Oh, certainly. Oh, there's no doubt about my being a solicitor. My clerk, a man of the utmost integrity, not to say probity, would give me a reference. I am in the books; I belong to the Law Society. But my heart turns elsewhere. Officially I have embraced the profession of a solicitor--[_Frankly, to MRS. CRAWSHAW._] But you know what these official embraces are.

MARGARET. I'm afraid--[_She turns to her husband for assistance._]

CLIFTON [_ to RICHARD _]. Unofficially, Mr. Meriton, I am wedded to the Muses.

VIOLA. Dick, isn't he lovely?

CRAWSHAW. Quite so. But just for the moment, Mr. Clifton, I take it that we are concerned with legal business. Should I ever wish to produce a play, the case would be different.

CLIFTON. Admirably put. Pray regard me entirely as the solicitor for as long as you wish. [_ He puts his hat down on a chair with the papers in it, and taking off his gloves, goes on dreamily.] Mr. Denis Clifton was superb as a solicitor. In spite of an indifferent make-up, his manner of taking off his gloves and dropping them into his hat--[_ He does so.]

MARGARET [_ to CRAWSHAW _]. I think, perhaps, Viola and I--

RICHARD [_ making a move too _]. We'll leave you to your business, Robert.

CLIFTON [_ holding up his hand _]. Just one moment if I may. I have a letter for you, Mr. Meriton.

RICHARD [_ surprised _]. For me?

CLIFTON. Yes. My clerk, a man of the utmost integrity--oh, but I said that before--he took it round to your rooms this morning, but found only painters and decorators there. [_ He is feeling in his pockets and now brings the letter out.] I brought it along, hoping that Mr. Crawshaw--but of course I never expected anything so delightful as this. [_ He hands over the letter with a bow.]

RICHARD. Thanks. [_ He puts it in his pocket.]

CLIFTON. Oh, but do read it now, won't you? [_ To MRS. CRAWSHAW._] One so rarely has an opportunity of being present when one's own letters are read. I think the habit they have on the stage of reading letters aloud to each other is such a very delightful one. [_ RICHARD, with a smile and a shrug, has opened his letter while CLIFTON is talking.]

RICHARD. Good Lord!

VIOLA. Dick, what is it?

RICHARD [_ reading _]. "199, Lincoln's Inn Fields. Dear Sir, I have the pleasure to inform you that under the will of the late Mr. Antony Clifton you are a beneficiary to the extent of £50,000."

VIOLA. Dick!

RICHARD. "A trifling condition is attached--namely, that you should take the name of--Wurzel-Flummery." [CLIFTON, with his hand on his heart, bows gracefully from one to the other of them.]

CRAWSHAW [_annoyed_]. Impossible! Why should he leave any money to you?

VIOLA. Dick! How wonderful!

MARGARET [_mildly_]. I don't remember ever having had a morning quite like this.

RICHARD [_angrily_]. Is this a joke, Mr. Clifton?

CLIFTON. Oh, the money is there all right. My clerk, a man of the utmost--

RICHARD. Then I refuse it. I'll have nothing to do with it. I won't even argue about it. [_Tearing the letter into bits._] That's what I think of your money. [_He stalks indignantly from the room._]

VIOLA. Dick! Oh, but, mother, he mustn't. Oh, I must tell him--[_She hurries after him._]

MARGARET [_with dignity_]. Really, Mr. Clifton, I'm surprised at you. [_She goes out too._]

CLIFTON [_looking round the room_]. And now, Mr. Crawshaw, we are alone.

CRAWSHAW. Yes. Well, I think, Mr. Clifton, you have a good deal to explain--

CLIFTON. My dear sir, I'm longing to begin. I have been looking forward to this day for weeks. I spent over an hour this morning dressing for it. [_He takes papers from his hat and moves to the sofa._] Perhaps I had better begin from the beginning.

CRAWSHAW [_interested, indicating the papers_]. The documents in the case?

CLIFTON. Oh dear, no--just something to carry in the hand. It makes one look more like a solicitor. [_Reading the title._] "Watherston v. Towser--_in re_ Great Missenden Canal Company." My clerk invents the titles; it keeps him busy. He is very fond of Towser; Towser is always coming in. [_Frankly._] You see, Mr. Crawshaw, this is my first real case, and I only got it because Antony Clifton is my uncle. My efforts

to introduce a little picturesqueness into the dull formalities of the law do not meet with that response that one would have expected.

CRAWSHAW [_looking at his watch_]. Yes. Well, I'm a busy man, and if you could tell me as shortly as possible why your uncle left this money to me, and apparently to Mr. Meriton too, under these extraordinary conditions, I shall be obliged to you.

CLIFTON. Say no more, Mr. Crawshaw; I look forward to being entirely frank with you. It will be a pleasure.

CRAWSHAW. You understand, of course, my position. I think I may say that I am not without reputation in the country; and proud as I am to accept this sacred trust, this money which the late Mr. Antony Clifton has seen fit--[_modestly_] one cannot say why--to bequeath to me, yet the use of the name Wurzel-Flummery would be excessively awkward.

CLIFTON [_cheerfully_]. Excessively.

CRAWSHAW. My object in seeing you was to inquire if it was absolutely essential that the name should go with the money.

CLIFTON. Well [_thoughtfully_], you may have the name without the money if you like. But you must have the name.

CRAWSHAW [_disappointed_]. Ah! [_Bravely_] Of course, I have nothing against the name, a good old Hampshire name--

CLIFTON [_shocked_]. My dear Mr. Crawshaw, you didn't think--you didn't really think that anybody had been called Wurzel-Flummery before? Oh no, no. You and Mr. Meriton were to be the first, the founders of the clan, the designers of the Wurzel-Flummery sporran--

CRAWSHAW. What do you mean, sir? Are you telling me that it is not a real name at all?

CLIFTON. Oh, it's a name all right. I know it is because--er--I made it up.

CRAWSHAW [_outraged_]. And you have the impudence to propose, sir, that I should take a made-up name?

CLIFTON [_soothingly_]. Well, all names are made up some time or other. Somebody had to think of--Adam.

CRAWSHAW. I warn you, Mr. Clifton, that I do not allow this trifling with serious subjects.

CLIFTON. It's all so simple, really.... You see, my Uncle Antony was a

rather unusual man. He despised money. He was not afraid to put it in its proper place. The place he put it in was--er--a little below golf and a little above classical concerts. If a man said to him, "Would you like to make fifty thousand this afternoon?" he would say--well, it would depend what he was doing. If he were going to have a round at Walton Heath--

CRAWSHAW. It's perfectly scandalous to talk of money in this way.

CLIFTON. Well, that's how he talked about it. But he didn't find many to agree with him. In fact, he used to say that there was nothing, however contemptible, that a man would not do for money. One day I suggested that if he left a legacy with a sufficiently foolish name attached to it, somebody might be found to refuse it. He laughed at the idea. That put me on my mettle. "Two people," I said; "leave the same silly name to two people, two well-known people, rival politicians, say, men whose own names are already public property. Surely they wouldn't both take it." That touched him. "Denis, my boy, you've got it," he said. "Upon what vile bodies shall we experiment?" We decided on you and Mr. Meriton. The next thing was to choose the name. I started on the wrong lines. I began by suggesting names like Porker, Tosh, Bugge, Spiffkins--the obvious sort. My uncle--

CRAWSHAW [boiling with indignation]. How dare you discuss me with your uncle, sir! How dare you decide in this cold-blooded way whether I am to be called--ah--Tosh--or-ah--Porker!

CLIFTON. My uncle wouldn't hear of Tosh or Porker. He wanted a humorous name--a name he could roll lovingly round his tongue--a name expressing a sort of humorous contempt--Wurzel-Flummery! I can see now the happy ruminating smile which came so often on my Uncle Antony's face in those latter months. He was thinking of his two Wurzel-Flumgeries. I remember him saying once--it was at the Zoo--what a pity it was he hadn't enough to divide among the whole Cabinet. A whole bunch of Wurzel-Flumgeries; it would have been rather jolly.

CRAWSHAW. You force me to say, sir, that if that was the way you and your uncle used to talk together at the Zoo, his death can only be described as a merciful intervention of Providence.

CLIFTON. Oh, but I think he must be enjoying all this somewhere, you know. I hope he is. He would have loved this morning. It was his one regret that from the necessities of the case he could not live to enjoy his own joke; but he had hopes that echoes of it would reach him wherever he might be. It was with some such idea, I fancy, that toward the end he became interested in spiritualism.

CRAWSHAW [rising solemnly]. Mr. Clifton, I have no interest in the present whereabouts of your uncle, nor in what means he has of

overhearing a private conversation between you and myself. But if, as you irreverently suggest, he is listening to us, I should like him to hear this. That, in my opinion, you are not a qualified solicitor at all, that you never had an uncle, and that the whole story of the will and the ridiculous condition attached to it is just the tomfool joke of a man who, by his own admission, wastes most of his time writing unsuccessful farces. And I propose--

CLIFTON. Pardon my interrupting. But you said farces. Not farces, comedies--of a whimsical nature.

CRAWSHAW. Whatever they were, sir, I propose to report the whole matter to the Law Society. And you know your way out, sir.

CLIFTON. Then I am to understand that you refuse the legacy, Mr. Crawshaw?

CRAWSHAW [_startled_]. What's that?

CLIFTON. I am to understand that you refuse the fifty thousand pounds?

CRAWSHAW. If the money is really there, I most certainly do not refuse it.

CLIFTON. Oh, the money is most certainly there--and the name. Both waiting for you.

CRAWSHAW [_thumping the table_]. Then, sir, I accept them. I feel it my duty to accept them, as a public expression of confidence in the late Mr. Clifton's motives. I repudiate entirely the motives that you have suggested to him, and I consider it a sacred duty to show what I think of your story by accepting the trust which he has bequeathed to me. You will arrange further matters with my solicitor. Good-morning, sir.

CLIFTON [_to himself as he rises_]. Mr. Crawshaw here drank a glass of water. [_To CRAWSHAW_] Mr. Wurzel-Flummery, farewell. May I express the parting wish that your future career will add fresh luster to--my name. [_To himself as he goes out._] Exit Mr. Denis Clifton with dignity. [_But he has left his papers behind him. CRAWSHAW, walking indignantly back to the sofa, sees the papers and picks them up._]

CRAWSHAW [_contemptuously_]. "Watherston v. Towser--in re Great Missenden Canal Company." Bah! [_He tears them up and throws them into the fire. He goes back to his writing-table and is seated there as VIOLA, followed by MERITON, comes in._]

VIOLA. Father, Dick doesn't want to take the money, but I have told him that of course he must. He must, mustn't he?

RICHARD. We needn't drag Robert into it, Viola.

CRAWSHAW. If Richard has the very natural feeling that it would be awkward for me if there were two Wurzel-Flummuries in the House of Commons, I should be the last to interfere with his decision. In any case, I don't see what concern it is of yours, Viola.

VIOLA [_surprised_]. But how can we get married if he doesn't take the money?

CRAWSHAW [_hardly understanding_]. Married? What does this mean, Richard?

RICHARD. I'm sorry it has come out like this. We ought to have told you before, but anyhow we were going to have told you in a day or two. Viola and I want to get married.

CRAWSHAW. And what did you want to get married on?

RICHARD [_with a smile_]. Not very much, I'm afraid.

VIOLA. We're all right now, father, because we shall have fifty thousand pounds.

RICHARD [_sadly_]. Oh, Viola, Viola!

CRAWSHAW. But naturally this puts a very different complexion on matters.

VIOLA. So of course he must take it, mustn't he, father?

CRAWSHAW. I can hardly suppose, Richard, that you expect me to entrust my daughter to a man who is so little provident for himself that he throws away fifty thousand pounds because of some fanciful objection to the name which goes with it.

RICHARD [_in despair_]. You don't understand, Robert.

CRAWSHAW. I understand this, Richard. That if the name is good enough for me, it should be good enough for you. You don't mind asking Viola to take your name, but you consider it an insult if you are asked to take my name.

RICHARD [_miserably to VIOLA_]. Do you want to be Mrs. Wurzel-Flummery?

VIOLA. Well, I'm going to be Miss Wurzel-Flummery anyhow, darling.

RICHARD [_ beaten_]. Heaven help me! you'll make me take it. But you'll never understand.

CRAWSHAW [_ stopping to administer comfort to him on his way out_]. Come, come, Richard. [_ Patting him on the shoulder._] I understand perfectly. All that you were saying about money a little while ago--it's all perfectly true, it's all just what I feel myself. But in practice we have to make allowances sometimes. We have to sacrifice our ideals for--ah--others. I shall be very proud to have you for a son-in-law, and to feel that there will be the two of us in Parliament together upholding the honor of the--ah--name. And perhaps now that we are to be so closely related, you may come to feel some day that your views could be--ah--more adequately put forward from my side of the House.

RICHARD. Go on, Robert; I deserve it.

CRAWSHAW. Well, well! Margaret will be interested in our news. And you must send that solicitor a line--or perhaps a telephone message would be better. [_ He goes to the door and turns round just as he is going out._] Yes, I think the telephone, Richard; it would be safer.
[_ Exit._]

RICHARD [_ holding out his hands to VIOLA_]. Come here, Mrs. Wurzel-Flummery.

VIOLA. Not Mrs. Wurzel-Flummery; Mrs. Dick. And soon, please, darling.
[_ She comes to him._]

RICHARD [_ shaking his head sadly at her_]. I don't know what I've done, Viola. [_ Suddenly._] But you're worth it. [_ He kisses her, and then says in a low voice._] And God help me if I ever stop thinking so!

Enter MR. DENIS CLIFTON. He sees them, and walks about very tactfully with his back towards them, humming to himself.

RICHARD. Hullo!

CLIFTON [_ to himself_]. Now where did I put those papers? [_ He hums to himself again._] Now where--oh, I beg your pardon! I left some papers behind.

VIOLA. Dick, you'll tell him. [_ As she goes out, she says to CLIFTON._] Good-by, Mr. Clifton, and thank you for writing such nice letters.

CLIFTON. Good-by, Miss Crawshaw.

VIOLA. Just say it to see how it sounds.

CLIFTON. Good-by, Miss Wurzel-Flummery.

VIOLA [_smiling happily_]. No, not Miss, Mrs. [_She goes out._]

CLIFTON [_looking in surprise from her to him_]. You don't mean--

RICHARD. Yes; and I'm taking the money after all, Mr. Clifton.

CLIFTON. Dear me, what a situation! [_Thoughtfully to himself._] I wonder how a rough scenario would strike the managers.

RICHARD. Poor Mr. Clifton!

CLIFTON. Why poor?

RICHARD. You missed all the best part. You didn't hear what I said to Crawshaw about money before you came.

CLIFTON [_thoughtfully_]. Oh! was it very--[_Brightening up._] But I expect Uncle Antony heard. [_After a pause._] Well, I must be getting on. I wonder if you've noticed any important papers lying about, in connection with the Great Missenden Canal Company--a most intricate case, in which my clerk and I--[_He has murmured himself across to the fireplace, and the fragments of his important case suddenly catch his eye. He picks up one of the fragments._] Ah, yes. Well, I shall tell my clerk that we lost the case. He will be sorry. He had got quite fond of that canal. [_He turns to go, but first says to MERITON._] So you're taking the money, Mr. Meriton?

RICHARD. Yes.

CLIFTON. And Mr. Crawshaw too?

RICHARD. Yes.

CLIFTON [_to himself as he goes out_]. They are both taking it. [_He stops and looks up to UNCLE ANTONY with a smile._] Good old Uncle Antony--_he_knew--_he_knew! [_MERITON stands watching him as he goes._]

[THE CURTAIN.]

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A MODEST WIT

A SUPERCILIOUS nabob of the East--
Haughty, being great--purse-proud, being rich--
A governor, or general, at the least,
I have forgotten which--
Had in his family a humble youth,
Who went from England in his patron's suite,
An unassuming boy, in truth
A lad of decent parts, and good repute.
This youth had sense and spirit;
But yet with all his sense,
Excessive diffidence
Obscured his merit.

One day, at table, flushed with pride and wine,
His honour, proudly free, severely merry,
Conceived it would be vastly fine
To crack a joke upon his secretary.

"Young man," he said, "by what art, craft, or trade
Did your good father gain a livelihood?"
"He was a saddler, sir," Modestus said,
"And in his time was reckoned good."

"A saddler, eh? and taught you Greek,
Instead of teaching you to sew!
Pray, why did not your father make
A saddler, sir, of you?"

Each parasite, then, as in duty bound,
The joke applauded, and the laugh went round.
At length Modestus, bowing low,
Said (craving pardon, if too free he made),
"Sir, by your leave, I fain would know
Your father's trade!"

"My father's trade! by Heaven, that's too bad!
My father's trade? Why, blockhead, are you mad?
My father, sir, did never stoop so low--
He was a gentleman, I'd have you know."

"Excuse the liberty I take,"
Modestus said, with archness on his brow,
"Pray, why did not your father make
A gentleman of you?"

—Selleck Osborn.—

THE PHILOSOPHER'S SCALES

A MONK, when his rites sacerdotal were o'er,
In the depth of his cell with its stone-covered floor,
Resigning to thought his chimerical brain,
Once formed the contrivance we now shall explain;
But whether by magic's or alchemy's powers
We know not; indeed, 'tis no business of ours.

Perhaps it was only by patience and care,
At last, that he brought his invention to bear.
In youth 'twas projected, but years stole away,
And ere 'twas complete he was wrinkled and gray;
But success is secure, unless energy fails,
And at length he produced THE PHILOSOPHER'S SCALES.

"What were they?" you ask. You shall presently see.
These scales were not made to weigh sugar and tea.
Oh, no; for such properties wondrous had they,
That qualities, feelings, and thoughts they could weigh,
Together with articles small or immense,
From mountains or planets to atoms of sense.

Naught was there so bulky but there it would lay,
And naught so ethereal but there it would stay,
And naught so reluctant but in it must go:
All which some examples more clearly will show.

The first thing he weighed was the head of Voltaire,
Which retained all the wit that had ever been there.
As a weight, he threw in a torn scrap of a leaf
Containing the prayer of the penitent thief;
When the skull rose aloft with so sudden a spell,
That it bounced like a ball on the roof of the cell.

One time he put in Alexander the Great,
With the garment that Dorcas had made, for a weight;
And though clad in armour from sandals to crown,
The hero rose up, and the garment went down.
A long row of almshouses, amply endowed
By a well-esteemed Pharisee, busy and proud,
Next loaded one scale; while the other was pressed
By those mites the poor widow dropped into the chest:

Up flew the endowment, not weighing an ounce.
And down, down the farthing-worth came with a bounce.

By further experiments (no matter how)
He found that ten chariots weighed less than one plough;
A sword with gilt trapping rose up in the scale,
Though balanced by only a ten penny nail;
A shield and a helmet, a buckler and spear,
Weighed less than a widow's uncry stallized tear.

A lord and a lady went up at full sail,
When a bee chanced to light on the opposite scale;
Ten doctors, ten lawyers, two courtiers, one earl,
Ten counsellors' wigs, full of powder and curl,
All heaped in one balance and swinging from thence,
Weighed less than a few grains of candor and sense;
A first-water diamond, with brilliants begirt,
Than one good potato just washed from the dirt;
Yet not mountains of silver and gold could suffice
One pearl to outweigh--'twas THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE.

Last of all, the whole world was bowled in at the grate,
With the soul of a beggar to serve for a weight,
When the former sprang up with so strong a rebuff
That it made a vast rent and escaped at the roof!
When balanced in air, it ascended on high,
And sailed up aloft, a balloon in the sky;
While the scale with the soul in't so mightily fell,
That it jerked the philosopher out of his cell.

Jane Taylor.

THE FOOL

There lived a fool.

For a long time he lived in peace and contentment; but by degrees rumours began to reach him that he was regarded on all sides as a vulgar idiot.

The fool was abashed and began to ponder gloomily how he might put an end to these unpleasant rumours.

A sudden idea, at last, illuminated his dull little brain.... And, without the slightest delay, he put it into practice.

A friend met him in the street, and fell to praising a well-known painter....

‘Upon my word!’ cried the fool, ‘that painter was out of date long ago ... you didn’t know it? I should never have expected it of you ... you are quite behind the times.’

The friend was alarmed, and promptly agreed with the fool.

‘Such a splendid book I read yesterday!’ said another friend to him.

‘Upon my word!’ cried the fool, ‘I wonder you’re not ashamed. That book’s good for nothing; every one’s seen through it long ago. Didn’t you know it? You’re quite behind the times.’

This friend too was alarmed, and he agreed with the fool.

‘What a wonderful fellow my friend N. N. is!’ said a third friend to the fool. ‘Now there’s a really generous creature!’

‘Upon my word!’ cried the fool. ‘N. N., the notorious scoundrel! He swindled all his relations. Every one knows that. You’re quite behind the times.’

The third friend too was alarmed, and he agreed with the fool and deserted his friend. And whoever and whatever was praised in the fool’s presence, he had the same retort for everything.

Sometimes he would add reproachfully: ‘And do you still believe in authorities?’

‘Spiteful! malignant!’ his friends began to say of the fool. ‘But what a brain!’

‘And what a tongue!’ others would add, ‘Oh, yes, he has talent!’

It ended in the editor of a journal proposing to the fool that he should undertake their reviewing column.

And the fool fell to criticising everything and every one, without in the least changing his manner, or his exclamations.

Now he, who once declaimed against authorities, is himself an authority, and the young men venerate him, and fear him.

And what else can they do, poor young men? Though one ought not, as a general rule, to venerate any one ... but in this case, if one didn’t venerate him, one would find oneself quite behind the times!

Fools have a good time among cowards.

April 1878.

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IN THE MISSION GARDEN, SAN GABRIEL

O golden day, wherein at last,
Long leagues and wintry overpast,
I stand beneath a sky as blue
As April violets drenched in dew,
And live within a dream come true!

From rosy-berried pepper-trees
The winds blow spicy fragrances;
The palms sway softly to and fro,
And down below,
Between the glossy leaves of these,
The sparkling, yellow sunbeams steep
The mission garden, where the bees
Are hoarding deep
Of heliotrope that hangs the wall
As for some princely festival,
While white and tall
Bright lilies bloom in grace untold,
And those rare roses, passing all
In splendor, called “The Cloth of Gold!”

O heart, my heart, throb high and fast
With rapture! for how couldst thou know

Amid the far-off frost and snow
Where all the skies are overcast
And shrill and chill the north-winds blow,
How couldst thou know
December heavens anywhere
Could show such rare
Such tender and divinest guise,
That earth and air
Could weave such strange, resistless spell
As this that folds us flower-wise
At sweet San Gabriel!

San Gabriel! the holy words
Fall soft as music on the ear;
I think they are as sweet to hear
As any song of summer birds;
And harkening them, the while in clear,
Pure, quivering notes,
The ancient bells begin to chime,
In shadowy-wise before me floats
A vision of the vanished time.
I see again
The little band from sunny Spain,
Those godly ones, and full of grace,
And without stain,
Who, heeding neither toil nor pain,
Desiring men of every race,
That such might see sweet Jesus' face,
And that at length the Lord might reign
Among all peoples, even so,
Sought in the wilderness this place,
And consecrated, long ago.

And gazing on the sacred pile
Their hands upreared in loving zeal,
My heart goes forth to them the while,
Those faithful fathers, true and leal!
How oft along each cloistered aisle
They counted o'er and o'er their beads,
While in this garden, unawares,
The fragrant flowers sowed their seeds.
—And richly as the flowers, the prayers
Bore fruit in gentle deeds!

In arched embrasures, lifted high
Against the sky,
The bells in clear-cut beauty show;
And loftier still, surmounting all,
And blessing thus the ancient wall,

A cross,—and on its summit, lo!
A slender bird with pearly breast
Sits peacefully at rest!

Ah me! Ah me! I know not why
This little bird with folded wings,
The cross, the tender azure sky,
Their pure, exceeding beauty brings
Swift tears, and smites my heart, till I
Am almost faint
To hide mine eyes for very pain!

Yet though thus for a little space
I bow my face,
Nor any grace
Of rose or lily can I see,
I know the while that memory,
Clear-eyed and free,
Upon my heart is graving deep
Each least, sweet loveliness, to keep
Through all the coming years for me.
And it shall be,
In afterwhiles, when far away,
When wintry skies are bleak and gray
And no birds sing,
I shall grow glad remembering
The sweetness of this scarlet day.

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SUBTLETY OF THE SERPENT

*"Now the serpent was more
subtil than any beast of
the field which the Lord
God had made."*

GENESIS iii. 1.

Through the green masses of the undergrowth,
Pools of silent water,
Where float large flowers and patches of white light,
Crawls the serpent, subtle, sad,
And tired of well-doing.
Nevermore will he help humanity.
Venomously he hisses at the Cherubim
Whose flaming sword sears the Heavens,
A sword whose flame turns every way
To keep the path of the Tree-of-Life.
A tropic spring, this first one,
With leaves like spears and banners;
But the ground is sweet with fallen petals
Of great blossoms
That heave their hot breath at the droning insects.
The air is full of the twittering of birds,
Whose innocence appeals to Adam
--Already outside the garden--
While, high up in their swaying green cradles
The monkeys carry on their high-pitched chatter.

The serpent reasoned thus--
"For long time have I been at war
With the ape-tribe;
Small apes with clutching hands,
Great apes (how hideous they are!)
Whom the God-of-Man
Has made in the image of Man.
They tried to kill me:
I tried to kill them.
But Adam and Eve deceived me,
Looking scornfully at the great apes,
They pretended to a difference.
For a long time I loved them,
Fascinated by their words,
By their story of the Creation--
But now, O Lord,
Give me a good old-fashioned ape
Every time

--An ape who tries to kill me
Without a chatter of clean-hands, law-and-order,
Crime passionel,
Self-defence or helping-me-to-help-myself.
I may be a snake in the grass,
But I am not a hypocrite.
I may change my skin,
But I am not ashamed of it.
I have never pretended to be a super-snake
Or to walk except on my belly--

* * * * *

It is not only the ignorance of good or evil
That raises the monkey above the man
(Though the man knows evil and therefore prefers it),
But the fact that the monkey
Cannot yet disguise the good with bad words,
Or the bad with good ones.

* * * * *

Never before have I been cursed;
But man has made his God
Curse me with black words.
Now, therefore,
Will I curse Mankind.

--Man shall know good, but shall not act on it.
He shall know good, and turn it to evil purpose.
His twin curses shall be words and knowledge;
I, the snake, know a thing-or-two;
I know that man is a self-made monkey,
--And he knows it too!
But he will disguise it
With a God of his making,
A blustering God, a revengeful God,
A God who curses the Serpent
With sophistry, subtlety, and--words.
But I know that Man is still
An ape at heart,
A talkative chattering ape.
His curiosity shall discover many strange secrets,
But he will use them
For his two recreations,
Lying and killing,
Or--as he calls them--
Conversation and Sport.
His words shall girdle a continent
Swiftly, as a flash of fire;

They shall be written down,
Every day,
For millions of men to read
--But they will still be lies--black lies!
Men shall journey the world over
To kill the beasts of the field, the forest and jungle;
He shall kill them secretly, without their knowing
As with a thunder-bolt:
But his own kind
Will he kill in millions,
Slaughter and butcher
With the last refinements of torture.
--And words, words,
Shall be the cause and end of it."

As the serpent crawled away on his belly
Through the silent waters of the undergrowth,
He heard two sharp voices,
Outside the garden.
"You did"--"I didn't."
"You did"--"I didn't."
--"It was the serpent."

A long silence, and then the second act,
When the brutal voice of the first statesman
Roared out
"Am I my brother's keeper?"

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SONNETS

I

Thou art not lovelier than lilacs,--no,
Nor honeysuckle; thou art not more fair
Than small white single poppies,--I can bear
Thy beauty; though I bend before thee, though
From left to right, not knowing where to go,
I turn my troubled eyes, nor here nor there
Find any refuge from thee, yet I swear
So has it been with mist,--with moonlight so.
Like him who day by day unto his draught
Of delicate poison adds him one drop more
Till he may drink unharmed the death of ten,
Even so, inured to beauty, who have quaffed
Each hour more deeply than the hour before,
I drink--and live--what has destroyed some men.

II

Time does not bring relief; you all have lied
Who told me time would ease me of my pain!
I miss him in the weeping of the rain;
I want him at the shrinking of the tide;
The old snows melt from every mountain-side,
And last year's leaves are smoke in every lane;
But last year's bitter loving must remain
Heaped on my heart, and my old thoughts abide!
There are a hundred places where I fear
To go,--so with his memory they brim!
And entering with relief some quiet place
Where never fell his foot or shone his face
I say, "There is no memory of him here!"
And so stand stricken, so remembering him!

III

Mindful of you the sodden earth in spring
And all the flowers that in the springtime grow,
And dusty roads, and thistles, and the slow
Rising of the round moon, all throats that sing
The summer through, and each departing wing,
And all the nests that the bared branches show,
And all winds that in any weather blow,

And all the storms that the four seasons bring.
You go no more on your exultant feet
Up paths that only mist and morning knew,
Or watch the wind, or listen to the beat
Of a bird's wings too high in air to view,--
But you were something more than young and sweet
And fair,--and the long year remembers you.

IV

Not in this chamber only at my birth--
When the long hours of that mysterious night
Were over, and the morning was in sight--
I cried, but in strange places, steppe and firth
I have not seen, through alien grief and mirth;
And never shall one room contain me quite
Who in so many rooms first saw the light,
Child of all mothers, native of the earth.
So is no warmth for me at any fire
To-day, when the world's fire has burned so low;
I kneel, spending my breath in vain desire,
At that cold hearth which one time roared so strong,
And straighten back in weariness, and long
To gather up my little gods and go.

V

If I should learn, in some quite casual way,
That you were gone, not to return again--
Read from the back-page of a paper, say,
Held by a neighbour in a subway train,
How at the corner of this avenue
And such a street (so are the papers filled)
A hurrying man--who happened to be you--
At noon to-day had happened to be killed,
I should not cry aloud--I could not cry
Aloud, or wring my hands in such a place--
I should but watch the station lights rush by
With a more careful interest on my face,
Or raise my eyes and read with greater care
Where to store furs and how to treat the hair.

VI

Bluebeard

This door you might not open, and you did;
So enter now, and see for what slight thing
You are betrayed.... Here is no treasure hid,
No cauldron, no clear crystal mirroring
The sought-for truth, no heads of women slain
For greed like yours, no writhings of distress,
But only what you see.... Look yet again--
An empty room, cobwebbed and comfortless.
Yet this alone out of my life I kept
Unto myself, lest any know me quite;
And you did so profane me when you crept
Unto the threshold of this room to-night
That I must never more behold your face.
This now is yours. I seek another place.

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PENELOPE

A COMEDY

In Three Acts

BY W. S. MAUGHAM

LONDON: WILLIAM HEINEMANN
MCMXII

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This play, originally called _Man and Wife_, was produced at the Comedy Theatre on Saturday, January 9, 1909, with the following cast:

DR. O'FARRELL	W. GRAHAM BROWNE
PROFESSOR GOLIGHTLY	ALFRED BISHOP
DAVENPORT BARLOW	ERIC LEWIS
MR. BEADSWORTH	HERBERT ROSS
MR. ANDERSON	J. H. BREWER
MRS. FERGUSSON	NORMA WHALLEY
MRS. GOLIGHTLY	KATE BISHOP
MRS. WATSON	MRS. CHARLES CALVERT
PEYTON	E. ARTHUR JONES
PENELOPE	MARIE TEMPEST

CHARACTERS

PENELOPE
DR. O'FARRELL
PROFESSOR GOLIGHTLY
MRS. GOLIGHTLY
MR. DAVENPORT BARLOW
MRS. FERGUSSON
MR. BEADSWORTH
MRS. WATSON
A PATIENT
PEYTON

SCENE: Dr. O'Farrell's house in John Street, Mayfair

TIME: The Present Day

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PENELOPE

THE FIRST ACT

SCENE: A drawing-room in O'FARRELL'S house in John Street. It is very prettily but not extravagantly furnished. The O'FARRELLS are a young married couple of modest income.

It is between six and seven in the evening.

PEYTON, a neat parlour-maid, opens the door and shows in MR. DAVENPORT BARLOW.

BARLOW _is a short, self-important person of middle age. He is very bald, red in the face, and wears a small, neatly curled moustache; he is dressed in the height of fashion. His manner is fussy and pompous. He comes forward as though he expected to find some one in the room. Seeing that it is empty, he stops and looks at PEYTON.
He cannot make out why there is no one to receive him.

BARLOW.

[_In a tone of surprise._] Is Mrs. O'Farrell not here?

PEYTON.

No, sir.

BARLOW.

H'm.... Will you let her know I've come?

PEYTON.

Mrs. O'Farrell is not at home, sir.

BARLOW.

Not at home?... But....

PEYTON.

Mrs. O'Farrell said, would you kindly sit down and make yourself comfortable? And I was to give you the Morning Post.

BARLOW.

[_Pompously._] I can't imagine why Mrs. O'Farrell should think I haven't read the Morning Post at six o'clock in the evening.

PEYTON.

[_Imperturbably._] And Mrs. O'Farrell said, will you have a whisky and soda, sir?

BARLOW.

But when is Mrs. O'Farrell coming in?

PEYTON.

I don't know at all, sir.

BARLOW.

But she telegraphed to me this afternoon, asking me to come and see her at once.

PEYTON.

Yes, sir; I took the telegram to the post office myself.

BARLOW.

It seems very extraordinary that she should have gone out. The matter was of considerable importance.

PEYTON.

[Politely.] Yes, sir.

BARLOW.

Very well, I'll sit down and wait. But I can't stay long. I'm dining at ... no matter.

PEYTON.

Very good, sir.

[PEYTON _goes out_. BARLOW _goes to a looking-glass, takes a little brush out of his pocket, and brushes his moustache_. PEYTON _comes in again with a small tray on which are a decanter, a syphon, and a glass_.

BARLOW.

Oh, thank you. Did you say you had the Morning Post?

PEYTON.

Yes, sir. [She hands it to him.

BARLOW.

Ah, thank you.

[PEYTON _goes out_. BARLOW _helps himself to a whisky and soda, turns to the fashionable intelligence in the paper, and begins to read it with a little smile of self-satisfaction_.

BARLOW.

[_Half to himself._] The Duchess of St. Erth returned to Wales yesterday. The Marchioness of Mereston has arrived at 89 Grosvenor Square. The Marchioness of Serlo and Lady Eleanor King leave for Paris this morning.

[PEYTON _comes in, followed by_ MRS. GOLIGHTLY. MRS. GOLIGHTLY _is an extremely stout, good-natured lady of middle age. She is very active, but short of breath. She gives one a continual impression of having just run up a steep hill. She is_ DAVENPORT BARLOW'S _sister_.]

PEYTON.

Mrs. Golightly.

BARLOW.

Isabel!

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

Are you here, Davenport? Where's Penelope?

BARLOW.

[_As if it were the most extraordinary thing in the world._] She's out!

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

[_Astonished._] Out?

[_She turns to_ PEYTON _with a look of inquiry_.]

PEYTON.

Mrs. O'Farrell said, would you kindly sit down and make yourself comfortable, ma'am? And I was to bring you the Church Times.

BARLOW.

But....

PEYTON.

[_Calmly._] And Mrs. O'Farrell said, will you have a strong cup of tea, ma'am?

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

I'm surprised that Mrs. O'Farrell should have gone out, because she expected me.

PEYTON.

[Handing MRS. GOLIGHTLY a paper.] Yes, ma'am.

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

[Taking it.] What is this?

PEYTON.

The Church Times, ma'am.

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

[With a look of exasperation at BARLOW.] Oh, thank you.... I think I will have a cup of tea, please.

PEYTON.

Very good, ma'am.

[Exit.

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

I wonder why on earth Penelope should insist on my reading the Church Times.

BARLOW.

I've just had a telegram from her.

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

So have I, asking me to come at once. [With a ray of light.] Perhaps we shall find some explanation in the Church Times.

BARLOW.

Nonsense. What can the Church Times have to do with the Archduchess Anastasia?

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

My dear Davenport, what are you talking about?

[PEYTON _enters to announce_ PROFESSOR GOLIGHTLY _and immediately afterwards goes out_. GOLIGHTLY _is a tall, spare man with grey hair, well groomed and alert. He is neatly dressed, quite tidy, and might just as well be a lawyer or a doctor as a professor of mathematics. He is clean-shaven._

PEYTON.

Professor Golightly.

GOLIGHTLY.

Hulloa, Davenport! [_To his wife_] My dear, you're the last person I expected to find here. I thought there was a meeting of the Missionary Society at the Albert Hall.

[PEYTON _comes in with a tray on which are tea-things, a glass of barley-water, and a copy of the "Athenæum_."

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

Oh, thank you.

PEYTON.

[_To_ GOLIGHTLY.] Mrs. O'Farrell said, will you have a glass of barley-water, sir?

GOLIGHTLY.

Barley-water!

PEYTON.

And I was to bring you the Athenæum. We couldn't get this week's, sir, but this is last week's, and Mrs. O'Farrell hopes it will do as well.

GOLIGHTLY.

[_With a faint smile._] It's very kind of you to have taken so much trouble.

PEYTON.

Thank you, sir.

[_Exit._

GOLIGHTLY.

What on earth does Penelope want me to do with last week's Athenæum and a glass of barley-water?

BARLOW.

Well, presumably she wants you to drink the one and to read the other.

GOLIGHTLY.

[To his wife.] My dear, I think it's very hard that you should have brought up our only child on the idea that my favourite form of refreshment is barley-water.

BARLOW.

It looks as if Penelope expected you, too.

GOLIGHTLY.

I've just had a wire from her.

BARLOW.

Have you? I wonder why on earth she wired to you.

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

It's so extraordinary that she shouldn't be here. It makes me feel very nervous.

GOLIGHTLY.

Well, frankly, I couldn't make head or tail of it, so I jumped into a motor cab and came round from the club at once.

[PEYTON comes in, followed by BEADSWORTH. He is a middle-aged solicitor, with a benign manner.

PEYTON.

Mr. Beadsworth.

GOLIGHTLY.

Well, I'm hanged.

BARLOW.

My dear Charles, I wish you wouldn't be slangy. It's gone out in our set.

BEADSWORTH.

[_Shaking hands with_ MRS. GOLIGHTLY.] I've just had a telegram from Penelope asking me to come at once. [_Turning to_ PEYTON.] Will you let Mrs. O'Farrell know I'm here?

GOLIGHTLY.

She's out.

PEYTON.

Mrs. O'Farrell said, would you make yourself comfortable, sir, and we've got the Law Times if you'd like to read it, and will you have a glass of port, sir?

[BEADSWORTH _looks round at the others in bewilderment_.

GOLIGHTLY.

By all means have a glass of port, and I'll swop it for my barley-water.

BEADSWORTH.

[_To_ PEYTON.] Thank you.

PEYTON.

[_Handing him the paper._] Very good, sir.

[_Exit._

BEADSWORTH.

What does she want me to do with the Law Times?

GOLIGHTLY.

I asked the same question when Peyton handed me last week's Athenæum, and Davenport, with the perspicacity that distinguishes him, answered: read it.

BEADSWORTH.

Can you tell me what Penelope wants? Her telegram suggested that she wished to see me not as an old friend, but in my official capacity as the family solicitor.

GOLIGHTLY.

I haven't an idea. I thought her telegram most mysterious.

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

I wish she'd come in. I'm beginning to be dreadfully uneasy.

BARLOW.

[Rather pompously.] I think I can put your minds at rest. I am in a position to explain the whole matter to you. The telegram she sent me makes it perfectly clear. I daresay you know that the Archduchess Anastasia is a patient of Dickie's. And a very nice patient for him to have. I've never met her, though I happen to know several members of her family, and she's a very cultivated, pleasant woman. I've always said to Dickie that that is the sort of practice he ought to get. The middle classes do a doctor no good.

GOLIGHTLY.

My dear Davenport, do go on with your story.

BARLOW.

Well, it appears that the Archduchess Anastasia has signified her desire to know Penelope. Very charming and graceful action on her part, and just like her. Of course she's extremely grateful to Dickie for all he's done. He's worked a miraculous cure, and I daresay she's heard that Penelope is my niece. It's a maxim you can always go on: royalty knows everything. And the long and the short of it is that she's coming to lunch here. Of course Penelope knows nothing about these matters, and in a state of great excitement she's sent for me. It's the best thing she could do. I can tell her everything. I've lived in that set all my life. It's nothing to be particularly proud about--mere accident of birth--I happen to be a gentleman. A certain family. Well, there it is, you see.

GOLIGHTLY.

But do you mean to say that Penelope wired all that to you? It must have cost her a perfect fortune.

BARLOW.

She put it a little more briefly, of course, but that was the gist of

it.

BEADSWORTH.

I can't imagine why she should send for me because a royalty is coming to luncheon with her. It was very inconvenient to get away. I had a dozen people waiting to see me, and I was obliged to slip out by the back door in order to avoid them.

GOLIGHTLY.

But what are the exact words of the wire she sent you, Davenport?

BARLOW.

You can see it if you like. [_ Taking it from his pocket and reading._]
“Come at once. Archduchess Anastasia. Penelope.”

GOLIGHTLY.

But d'you mean to say that you made up all that story out of those three words?

BARLOW.

Penelope knew I had a certain amount of intelligence. She didn't want to waste her money, so she just put what was essential, and left me to gather the rest.

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

But my telegram says nothing about the Archduchess Anastasia.

BARLOW.

What did Penelope say to you?

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

[_ Taking out the telegram. _] “Come at once! Grave scandal! Central African Mission. Penelope.”

BARLOW.

But that's absurd. You know how stupid the Post Office is. They must have made a mistake. I know that the Pomeranian Royal Family is very odd, but there are limits, and I can't imagine the Archduchess Anastasia being mixed up in a scandal with a Central African missionary.

BEADSWORTH.

Well, my wire merely said: "Come at once; six and eightpence. Penelope."

BARLOW.

Six and eightpence! Why six and eightpence?

BEADSWORTH.

I don't know. That is why I lost no time in coming.

GOLIGHTLY.

[With a twinkle.] My impression is that the Archduchess Anastasia, instead of paying Dickie's bill for miraculously curing her, has eloped with a missionary, and Penelope, by aid of the law [with a gesture towards BEADSWORTH], wants to recover the money.

BARLOW.

It's nonsense! You're so unpractical, Charles.

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

[To her husband.] But you had a telegram too, dear.

GOLIGHTLY.

"Come at once. Decimal 7035. Penelope."

BARLOW.

How very odd.

[The door is softly opened and PENELOPE slips in; for a moment the others do not see her, and she stands smiling at them.
GOLIGHTLY catches sight of her. All the others turn.]

GOLIGHTLY.

Penelope.

THE OTHERS.

Penelope.

PENELOPE.

[_ Coming forward and kissing_ MRS. GOLIGHTLY.] Good evening, mamma!

BARLOW.

[_Eagerly._] Well?

PENELOPE.

Well, papa. [_She puts her face up for him to kiss._]

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

[_Anxiously._] Now, Penelope.

PENELOPE.

Oh, Mr. Beadsworth, how nice of you to come. [_She shakes hands with him._] Kiss me, Uncle Davenport. [_She calmly puts up her face. With some irritation he kisses her._]

PENELOPE.

Thank you.... Was your whisky and soda quite right? [_Looking round._]
And the port? Father, you haven't touched the barley-water. You
ungrateful old thing!

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

[_Exasperated._] My dear, for goodness' sake explain.

BARLOW.

Where have you been all this time?

PENELOPE.

I--I've been sitting in the consulting-room. [_With a roguish smile._] I
watched you all come in.

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

[_Rather injured._] Peyton said you were out.

BARLOW.

Really, Penelope, I think your behaviour is outrageous.

PENELOPE.

You see, I thought if I saw you one after the other as you came in, I should have to make four scenes instead of one. It would have been very exhausting and not nearly so effective.

GOLIGHTLY.

Are you going to make a scene?

PENELOPE.

[_With the greatest satisfaction._] I'm going to make a dreadful scene in a minute.

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

Now, my dear, before you go any further, for goodness' sake tell us what you meant by your telegrams.

PENELOPE.

Well, you see, I wanted you all to come immediately, and I thought the best thing was to trail your ruling passions under your noses.

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

Do you understand what she means, Charles?

PENELOPE.

My dear mother, it's the simplest thing in the world. You spend your life in converting the heathen--from a distance--and I knew if I mentioned the Central African Mission you'd fly here on the wings of the wind.

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

In point of fact I came in an omnibus. But do you mean to tell me that there has been no scandal in connection with the Central African Mission?

PENELOPE.

[_Smiling._] I'm dreadfully sorry to disappoint you, mother.

GOLIGHTLY.

And what in heaven's name made you wire decimal 7035 to me?

PENELOPE.

Oh, that's our telephone number, and I just put decimal instead of Gerrard.

GOLIGHTLY.

I thought the figures were strangely familiar.

PENELOPE.

And there you are, you see.

BARLOW.

[_ Chuckling.] I think it's a capital idea. And she just flung the words six and eightpence at you, Beadsworth, and knew she'd fetch the lawyer.

PENELOPE.

[_ To BEADSWORTH.] You're not cross with me, are you?

[_ He shakes his head, smiling._

BARLOW.

And now, my dear, that you've disposed of them, tell me all about the Archduchess Anastasia.

PENELOPE.

[_ Looking at him blankly.] The Archduchess Anastasia? But I invented her.

BARLOW.

What d'you mean, you invented her? I know her well, I've known her for years. I know her whole family.

PENELOPE.

[_ Rather embarrassed, but trying not to laugh.] Well, you see--I wanted you to come, too. And....

BARLOW.

I don't understand what you mean at all, Penelope. You mention one of my most intimate friends, and then you tell me you invented her.

PENELOPE.

I'm awfully sorry. I really didn't know there was such a person, and I thought I'd made her up out of my own head.... [With a chuckle.] I think it was rather clever of me to hit upon some one you know so well.

BARLOW.

I don't know why you should think the mere mention of the Archduchess's name would make me come here.

PENELOPE.

Well, you see, I know that you go out a great deal, and you know such crowds of people. I felt quite sure that if there were an Archduchess Anastasia you'd know her, and [with a wave of the hand] well, there it is you see.

[BARLOW _fumes silently, but does not answer_.

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

Now, Penelope, tell us what you really do want.

PENELOPE.

[In matter-of-fact tones.] I want to divorce Dickie.

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

What!

GOLIGHTLY.

My dear child.

BARLOW.

Good gracious!

[These three speeches are said simultaneously.

PENELOPE.

[Ruefully.] I intended to make such a scene, and now you've made me blurt it all out in three words.

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

But I don't understand.

PENELOPE.

I'll say it again, shall I? I want to divorce Dickie.

BEADSWORTH.

You don't really mean it, do you?

PENELOPE.

[Indignantly.] Of course I mean it. I'm never going to speak to him again. That's to say, I shall have a scene with him first. I'm quite determined to have a scene with somebody.

GOLIGHTLY.

And where is Dickie now?

PENELOPE.

He's on his way home with the usual story. [With a sudden break in her voice.] Oh, if you only knew how utterly miserable I am.

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

My darling, is it really serious?

PENELOPE.

[Desperately.] Oh, what can I do to make you all understand?

GOLIGHTLY.

The best way would be to begin at the beginning, and tell us all about it coherently.

BARLOW.

[Pompously.] My dear Charles, this is not the kind of matter in which you can be of any use. You're a mathematician, and you're not expected to know anything about practical affairs.

GOLIGHTLY.

[Faintly ironic.] I apologise profusely.

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

[_To_ PENELOPE, _to ask her to speak_.] Darling?

PENELOPE.

Well, the first thing is that I simply dote upon Dickie. I've never loved any one else, and I never shall.

BEADSWORTH.

That's a very satisfactory confession after four years of matrimony.

PENELOPE.

Five years, three months, and two days. And every day I've loved Dickie more.

BEADSWORTH.

I've never seen a more devoted couple.

PENELOPE.

We've never had a quarrel. We've never even been cross with one another. It's been a honeymoon that's never come to an end.

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

Well?

PENELOPE.

And now I've discovered that he's been lying to me for the last month. He's been coming home dreadfully late, and when I've asked him where he's been, he's said that he had to see a patient who was very ill--such an interesting case--and it worried him so much that he was obliged to go to his club and have a rubber to settle his nerves. And the interesting case and the rubber of bridge are Ada Fergusson.

BARLOW.

[_Pompously_.] But who is Ada Fergusson? I've never heard of her.

PENELOPE.

Ada Fergusson's a great friend of mine. And I hate her. I always knew she was a cat. For the last four weeks Dickie's been spending every afternoon with her from four till seven.

GOLIGHTLY.

[Raising his eyebrows.] But do you always ask your husband where he's been when he comes in?

PENELOPE.

[Impatiently.] My dear papa, what has that got to do with it? We all know that you're an old dear, and the greatest mathematician in the world, but you know nothing about life at all.

GOLIGHTLY.

I apologise again.

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

Give him a sheet of paper and a pencil, Penelope, and he'll amuse himself by doing sums while we talk the matter out.

PENELOPE.

[Pushing writing materials over to him.] There you are, papa.

BEADSWORTH.

But how did you find out?

PENELOPE.

[Impatiently.] Oh, what does it matter how I found out! I've got all sorts of proofs.

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

You could knock me down with a feather.

GOLIGHTLY.

[With a smile.] My dear!

BARLOW.

I am not in the least surprised.

PENELOPE.

Uncle Davenport!

BARLOW.

I have expected it all along. You will remember, Isabel, that I was against the marriage from the beginning. I said, one doesn't marry a doctor. One sometimes meets them in society when they've had their angles rubbed off a little and perhaps have been knighted, but one never meets their wives. We suppose they do marry, but they don't marry any one we know. I may be old-fashioned, but I stick to my opinion that there are only three possible professions for a gentleman, the law, the army, and the church.

PENELOPE.

My dear Uncle Davenport, you're talking nonsense.

BARLOW.

[Huffily.] You ask me for my opinion, and I give it you. I regret that you should think it nonsense.

BEADSWORTH.

And what are you proposing to do now?

PENELOPE.

[With great determination.] I'm never going to live with Dickie again. As soon as I've seen him I shall leave this house for ever.

BEADSWORTH.

You're proposing to have a few words with him?

PENELOPE.

Several. I'm going to tell him that I despise him, and that I hate him; I'm going to throw my wedding ring in his face, and then I shall sweep out of the room.

BEADSWORTH.

Have you really made up your mind that you won't forgive him?

PENELOPE.

Nothing would induce me ever to speak to him again if it weren't that I want to tell him exactly what I think of him.

BARLOW.

Besides, you've got your family to think of. Of course you must leave him. You see, that is what I say, you're not safe with people of no birth. I look upon all this as a blessing in disguise.

BEADSWORTH.

Do you wish to bring an action for judicial separation?

PENELOPE.

My dear Mr. Beadsworth, what are you talking about! I'm going to divorce him. I'm going to make an awful scandal.

BEADSWORTH.

Well, I suppose we could arrange that at a pinch with the help of the newspapers. Has he ever been cruel to you?

PENELOPE.

Good heavens, no! That's what makes me so angry. The last month he's been more perfectly charming and delightful than ever. Oh, I wish I could do something really unpleasant to Ada Fergusson. Something with boiling oil in it.

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

I am shocked, frankly shocked. I would never have thought that Dickie could be so wicked.

BARLOW.

Family life in England is going to the dogs. That is the long and short of it.

[_Suddenly_ PENELOPE _catches sight of what_ GOLIGHTLY _has been diligently writing_. _She gives the paper a startled look and then turns round._

PENELOPE.

Mother, a dreadful thing has happened. Papa has suddenly become a drivelling lunatic.

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

My dear, what are you saying?

PENELOPE.

He's been adding two and two together all over that piece of paper, and he makes it five every time.

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

Charles!

[PENELOPE _hands the sheet to_ BARLOW.

PENELOPE.

Look.

BARLOW.

Two and two are five. Two and two are five.

[_He passes it on to_ BEADSWORTH.

BEADSWORTH.

Two and two are five. Two and two are five.

BARLOW.

I knew this would happen. I've been expecting it for years.

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

Charles, pull yourself together.

PENELOPE.

Papa, you don't really think that two and two are five?

GOLIGHTLY.

On the contrary, I'm convinced that two and two are four.

PENELOPE.

Then why on earth have you made it five?

GOLIGHTLY.

Do you know why you buy Pears' soap?

PENELOPE.

I expect you've been working too hard, father dear. Why don't you go and lie down for half an hour? And when Dickie comes in he'll give you a tonic.

GOLIGHTLY.

You buy Pears' soap because you're told on fifty thousand hoardings that it's matchless for the complexion.

PENELOPE.

That's not funny, papa, that's silly.

GOLIGHTLY.

You've only got to say a thing often enough, and all the world will believe it. And when the world believes it, it's very hard to say if it's true or not.

PENELOPE.

What has that got to do with two and two?

GOLIGHTLY.

I thought if I wrote "two and two are five" often enough I might come to think it true.

PENELOPE.

But if you wrote it a million times it wouldn't be any truer.

GOLIGHTLY.

That is the conclusion I'm regretfully forced to.

PENELOPE.

Well?

GOLIGHTLY.

The whole of life is merely a matter of adding two and two together and getting the right answer.

BARLOW.

My dear Charles, if you're going to discuss life I think there's no need

for me to stay. I've told you for twenty years that you're a scholar and a recluse. I have lived in the world, and I'm a practical man. If Penelope wants to consult me, I am at her service; if not....

PENELOPE.

Hold your tongue, Uncle Davenport.

BARLOW.

Really, Penelope.

GOLIGHTLY.

During the last five years I've seen you adding two and two together and making them about seventy-nine.

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

I don't know what you're talking about, Charles. Dickie's behaviour is abominable, and there are no excuses for him. It's a mere matter of common morality.

GOLIGHTLY.

My dear, I have no objection to you talking common morality if you'll let me talk common sense.

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

My dear Charles, they're the same thing.

PENELOPE.

If you think you can make me forgive Dickie by telling me that you were a wicked old thing yourself in your youth, I may as well tell you at once that it won't wash.

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

[Outraged.] What are you talking about, my dear?

PENELOPE.

Well, I've noticed that when a woman discovers that her husband has been unfaithful, her male relations invariably try to console her by telling her how shockingly they've treated their own wives.

GOLIGHTLY.

My dear, I was going to confess nothing of the sort. I never confess.

PENELOPE.

Of course, if it were the other way about, and mamma had kicked over the traces a little....

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

Darling, can you see me performing an acrobatic feat of that character?

PENELOPE.

Go on, papa.

GOLIGHTLY.

I think you've treated Dickie shamefully.

PENELOPE.

[Astounded.] I?

GOLIGHTLY.

If your mother had behaved to me as you've behaved to Dickie, I should certainly have taken to drink.

PENELOPE.

But I've been a perfect angel. I've simply worshipped the ground he walked on. I've loved him as no man was ever loved before.

GOLIGHTLY.

No man could stand it.

PENELOPE.

Papa, what do you mean?

GOLIGHTLY.

My dear, you've loved him morning, noon, and night. You've loved him when he talked, and you've loved him when he was silent. You've loved him walking, you've loved him eating, you've loved him sleeping. He's never been able to escape from your love.

PENELOPE.

But I couldn't help it.

GOLIGHTLY.

You need not have shown it.

PENELOPE.

And do you mean to say that justifies him in philandering with Ada Fergusson?

GOLIGHTLY.

It excuses him.

PENELOPE.

What beasts men must be!

GOLIGHTLY.

No; but strange as it may seem to you, they're human beings. When you were a child you doted on strawberry ices.

PENELOPE.

I dote on them still.

GOLIGHTLY.

Would you like to eat strawberry ice for breakfast, lunch, tea, and dinner every day for a month?

PENELOPE.

Good heavens! the thought fills me with horror.

GOLIGHTLY.

Poor Dickie has lived on strawberry ice for five years. It's been his only means of sustenance.

PENELOPE.

[_With consternation._] Oh!

GOLIGHTLY.

You've never let him go out without coming into the hall to put on his hat and kiss him good-bye; he's never come into the house without you running down to help him off with his coat and kiss him welcome. When he sat down after breakfast in the morning to read his paper and smoke his pipe, I've seen you sit down on the arm of his chair and put your arm round his neck.

BARLOW.

[_Outraged._] Penelope!

PENELOPE.

Do you think it was very awful?

BARLOW.

My dear child!

PENELOPE.

[_To_ BEADSWORTH.] Did Mrs. Beadsworth never sit on the arm of your chair when you were smoking your pipe?

BEADSWORTH.

I must confess I'm thankful my wife occupied those moments in attending to her household duties.

PENELOPE.

You are a lot of horrid old things. I ask you to come here to sympathise with me, and you're perfectly brutal to me.

BARLOW.

My dear Penelope, there are limits.

PENELOPE.

Well, I don't care; I'm going to divorce him.

GOLIGHTLY.

Let's do another little simple addition, shall we? Perhaps two and two will make four a second time.

PENELOPE.

I don't know that I much like being a mathematician's daughter.

GOLIGHTLY.

Don't you think, instead of divorcing your husband, it would be better to win back his affection?

PENELOPE.

I don't want his affection.

GOLIGHTLY.

[Smiling.] Are you sure you wouldn't if you could get it?

[PENELOPE looks at her father for a moment, then goes up to him quickly.]

PENELOPE.

[With tears in her voice.] Papa, d'you think I ever could win back his love? You say I've lost it through my own fault. Oh, I don't know what to do without him. I've been so wretched since I knew. I've tried to put a cheerful face on it, but if you knew what I feel in my heart.... Oh, the brutes, why didn't they hide it from me?

BARLOW.

My dear Penelope, I expected you to have more spirit. He's a person of no family. I should have thought you were well rid of him.

PENELOPE.

Uncle Davenport, if you say a word against him, I will immediately have an attack of hysterics.

BARLOW.

What you expect your father to be able to tell you I can't imagine.

GOLIGHTLY.

[Smiling.] Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings, Davenport....

BARLOW.

I shouldn't have thought one could describe you as either. But, in any case, I can stay no longer.

PENELOPE.

Oh, no, don't go yet, Uncle Davenport.

BARLOW.

It appears that my advice is not wanted, and I promised to look in on dear Lady Hollington before dinner.

PENELOPE.

Do telephone to her that you can't come. You'll find a telephone in my sitting-room.

BARLOW.

[Shrugging his shoulders.] I'm too indulgent. People don't rate me at my proper value.

[He goes out.]

PENELOPE.

Papa, say you'll get Dickie back for me. I want him. I want him.

GOLIGHTLY.

My dear, it's very simple. It merely requires a great deal of tact, a great deal of courage, and a great deal of self-control.

PENELOPE.

[Ironically.] Nothing else?

GOLIGHTLY.

A good deal. You must never let yourself out of hand; you must keep guard on your tongue and your eyes and your smiles--and your temper.

PENELOPE.

I think you said it was very simple.

GOLIGHTLY.

Is Ada Fergusson pretty?

PENELOPE.

No, she's perfectly hideous.

GOLIGHTLY.

Is she? That makes it more serious.

PENELOPE.

Why?

GOLIGHTLY.

If a man falls in love with a pretty woman, he falls out of it. But if he falls in love with a plain one, he'll be in love with her all his life.

PENELOPE.

You take a load off my mind. Ada Fergusson's extremely attractive.

GOLIGHTLY.

Then you'll get him back.

PENELOPE.

Tell me exactly what to do, and I'll do it.

GOLIGHTLY.

Give him his head.

PENELOPE.

Is that all?

GOLIGHTLY.

It means a good deal. When he comes in, don't make a scene, but be charming to him. For once, don't ask him where he's been. When he leaves you, don't ask him where he's going, nor at what time he'll be back. Don't let him know that you have the least suspicion that anything has happened. On the contrary, take every opportunity of throwing him into Ada Fergusson's society.

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

Charles, you're asking Penelope to connive at immorality.

GOLIGHTLY.

When every difficulty disappears, Dickie will find half the savour of the intrigue gone. Half your battle is won. Leave the rest to time and Ada Fergusson. Let Ada Fergusson sit on the arm of his chair when he wants to read his paper. Let him account to Ada Fergusson for all his movements. Under such circumstances a woman is always on tenterhooks, and consequently she's always exacting. Whenever there's a pause in the conversation, Ada Fergusson will say, Do you care for me as much as ever you did? That speech is the rope around love's throat. Whenever he wants to go away, Ada Fergusson will implore him to stay five minutes longer. Those five minutes that a man stays against his will are the nails in love's coffin. Each time he leaves her Ada Fergusson will say, At what time will you be back? That question is the earth shovelled into love's grave.

[All this while PENELOPE has been staring at GOLIGHTLY with astonishment.]

PENELOPE.

Where did you learn all this, father?

GOLIGHTLY.

[With a deprecating shrug.] It's a mere matter of adding two and two together, my darling.

PENELOPE.

I had no idea that mathematics were so interesting--nor so immoral.

GOLIGHTLY.

What do you think of it?

PENELOPE.

But if Dickie falls out of love with Ada Fergusson there's no reason why he should fall in love again with me.

GOLIGHTLY.

You must make him.

PENELOPE.

I wish I knew how.

GOLIGHTLY.

It only requires a little more tact, a little more courage, and a little more self-control.

PENELOPE.

But if I acquire so many virtues I shan't be a woman, but a monster, and how can he love me then?

BEADSWORTH.

[_ From the window._] There's a car stopping at the door.

PENELOPE.

Listen.... I can hear a key being turned. It must be Dickie.

BEADSWORTH.

What are you going to do?

PENELOPE.

[_ Hesitating._] What do you think, mamma?

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

My dear, I highly disapprove of your father's idea, and I can't imagine how it ever came into his head, but I'm bound to say I think there's some sense in it.

PENELOPE.

[_ Making up her mind._] I'll try. Remember, no one knows anything that has happened. You'll back me up, mamma, won't you?

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

You're not going to ask me to tell a pack of lies, darling?

PENELOPE.

Only white ones, mother. If there's a whopper to tell, I'll tell it myself.

BEADSWORTH.

But what about Barlow?

GOLIGHTLY.

He's a man of the world. He's sure to put his foot in it.

PENELOPE.

I'll settle him.

[BARLOW _comes in_.

PENELOPE.

Ah!

BARLOW.

I could not get on to her. I don't know what's the matter with those telephone girls. Husses!

PENELOPE.

Uncle Davenport, I find I've been entirely mistaken about Dickie. He's not to blame in any way.

BARLOW.

Good gracious me! And Ada Fergusson?

PENELOPE.

Is, I have no doubt, no worse than anybody else.

BARLOW.

This is a surprise. How on earth have you come to this conclusion?

PENELOPE.

By adding two and two together.

BARLOW.

Upon my word! I must say, it annoys me that I should have been forced to break an important engagement for no reason. I should have thought....

PENELOPE.

[Interrupting.] Uncle Davenport, it's quite bad enough that I should be done out of a scene, but if you're going to make one it's more than I can stand.

BEADSWORTH.

Well, as I can't be of any more use to you, I think I'll get back to the bosom of my family.

PENELOPE.

Of course, I look upon this as a professional visit.

BEADSWORTH.

Oh, nonsense!

PENELOPE.

I couldn't dream of accepting your services for nothing. You must really let me know what I owe you.

BEADSWORTH.

I really don't know what to say.

PENELOPE.

Dickie charges a guinea when he goes to see anybody.

BEADSWORTH.

You only mentioned six and eightpence in your telegram.

PENELOPE.

Very well, I'll owe you that. It would really make me feel more comfortable.

BEADSWORTH.

You're not going to hand it over in hard cash?

PENELOPE.

I wasn't thinking of paying you. But I'd like to think I owed it you. You see, then, I shan't feel under any obligation.

BEADSWORTH.

In that case I surrender. Good-bye.

PENELOPE.

Good-bye.

BARLOW.

Good-bye, Beadsworth. You must come and dine with me at the club one of these days.

BEADSWORTH.

I should like to. Good-bye.

[_Exit._

BARLOW.

Very nice fellow. Quite a gentleman. No one would think he was a solicitor. I shall ask him to dinner with one or two people who don't matter.

PENELOPE.

There's Dickie. D'you hear him whistling? He's evidently in the best of spirits.

[DICKIE _comes in. He is a good-looking, well-dressed, professional man of five-and-thirty. He has boisterous spirits and high good humour. He is seldom put out of countenance. He has a charm of manner which explains PENELOPE'S _infatuation_.

DICKIE.

Hulloa! I couldn't make out what had become of you, Pen.

PENELOPE.

Why?

DICKIE.

You generally come down to meet me when I get in.

[PENELOPE _gives a slight start and conceals a smile_.

PENELOPE.

My sainted mother is here.

DICKIE.

[_ Gaily.] That's no reason why you should neglect a devoted husband.

[_ Shaking hands with_ MRS. GOLIGHTLY.] How is your sainted mother?

Hulloa, Uncle Davenport, what price duchesses to-day?

BARLOW.

I beg your pardon. I don't know what you mean.

DICKIE.

[_ Looking round at the decanters and glasses with which the room is scattered.] I say, you've been doing yourselves rather proud, haven't you? Who's been drinking port?

PENELOPE.

Nobody. It's an empty glass.

DICKIE.

That's how providence behaves to me. Deliberately puts temptation in my way. It's simply poison. Gout in my family, you know. My ancestors have lived on colchicum for a hundred years. I feel a tingling in my toes at the mere sight of a bottle of port. And yet I drink it.

[_ He fills himself a glass and sips it with great content._

BARLOW.

It's a great mistake, of course, to think that gout is a mark of good family. The porter of my club is a martyr to it.

DICKIE.

Perhaps he's the illegitimate son of an earl. You should ask him if he has a strawberry mark on his left shoulder. What's the matter, Pen?

PENELOPE.

[_ Astonished.] With me?

DICKIE.

I thought you seemed a bit under the weather.

PENELOPE.

Why?

DICKIE.

I don't know. You're not quite up to your usual form, are you? You've not asked me what I've been doing to-day. As a rule you're so interested in my movements.

PENELOPE.

[With a glance at her father.] I thought you'd tell me if you wanted to.

DICKIE.

I say, I do think that's a bit thick. I go slaving my very soul out to provide you with a motor and nice frocks and things, and you don't take the smallest interest in what I do.

PENELOPE.

[Smiling.] Well, what have you been doing this afternoon?

DICKIE.

[With a sigh of relief.] Oh, I've had the very deuce of a day. I've got a very interesting case on just now. Taking up a lot of my time. Of course, it worries me rather, but I suppose all these things come in the day's march. Well, I spent the best part of an hour there.

PENELOPE.

An hour?

DICKIE.

Yes, we had a consultation, you know.

PENELOPE.

But you had a consultation yesterday.

DICKIE.

Yesterday? Yes, she's a fussy old thing. She's always wanting consultations.

PENELOPE.

That's jolly, isn't it?

DICKIE.

I don't think it is. It looks as if she hadn't really confidence in me.

PENELOPE.

On the other hand, you can charge double, can't you?

DICKIE.

Yes, of course, it has that advantage.

PENELOPE.

I've been hankering after an ermine stole for a long time. I shall buy it now.

DICKIE.

[_ His face falling. _] Oh, but I haven't been paid yet.

PENELOPE.

They'll be only too glad to wait. And it's such a bargain.

DICKIE.

[_ To change the conversation. _] Well, after my consultation I was so fagged that I had to go into the club to have a rubber of Bridge.

GOLIGHTLY.

By the way, what is the name of your patient?

DICKIE.

The name of my patient?

PENELOPE.

Oh, yes, I was telling papa that you'd got a new patient who was bringing in pots of money. I couldn't remember her name.

DICKIE.

[_ Embarrassed. _] Oh--er, Mrs. Mac....

PENELOPE.

Mrs. Mac what?

DICKIE.

Mrs. Macnothing.

BARLOW.

How d'you mean, Mrs. Macnothing? I've never heard of a family called Macnothing.

DICKIE.

No, of course, her name isn't Macnothing.

BARLOW.

But you distinctly said it was Mrs. Macnothing.

DICKIE.

Now, my dear Pen, did I say anything about Macnothing?

PENELOPE.

Well, what is her name then?

DICKIE.

I've been telling you for the last ten minutes. Her name's Mrs. Mack.

BARLOW.

Why on earth didn't you say so at once?

GOLIGHTLY.

How did you find such a profitable patient?

DICKIE.

Oh, it was a great piece of luck. She heard about me from that little friend of yours, Pen. What is her name?

GOLIGHTLY.

You seem to have a very bad memory for names, Dickie. You should make a knot in your handkerchief.

DICKIE.

It's a friend of Pen's. [_ Pretending to try and remember.] Her husband's in the navy, stationed at Malta, isn't he?

PENELOPE.

Ada Fergusson.

DICKIE.

That's it, of course. Mrs. Fergusson.

BARLOW.

One of the Fergussons of Kingarth, I suppose?

DICKIE.

I don't know at all. Quite a nice little thing, I thought. I must confess that she didn't interest me very much.

[PEYTON _comes in to announce_ MRS. FERGUSSON. MRS. FERGUSSON _is a handsome, showy woman of about thirty_.

PEYTON.

Mrs. Fergusson.

[DICKIE _is filled with consternation_. PEYTON _goes out. There is a very brief moment of embarrassment, but_ PENELOPE _quickly recovers herself and goes up to the visitor effusively_.

PENELOPE.

How d'you do?

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Is it a preposterous hour to pay a call?

PENELOPE.

Of course not. I'm always delighted to see you.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

I've been shopping the whole afternoon, and it suddenly occurred to me that I hadn't seen you for ages.

PENELOPE.

Do you know my sainted mother?

MRS. FERGUSSON.

How d'you do?

PENELOPE.

This is my noble father, and this is my uncle.

BARLOW.

How d'you do?

[_He is evidently much struck by_ MRS. FERGUSSON.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

[_Turning blandly to_ DICKIE.] You haven't forgotten me?

DICKIE.

Of course not.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

We haven't met for ages, have we?

DICKIE.

Simply ages.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

I passed you in Piccadilly the other day, and you cut me dead.

DICKIE.

I'm so sorry, I'm so short-sighted.

PENELOPE.

Dickie, you're not at all short-sighted. How can you tell such fibs?

BARLOW.

[With pompous gallantry.] Dickie feels that only a physical impediment can excuse a man for not seeing a pretty woman.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Oh, how very nice of you to say that.

BARLOW.

Not at all, not at all.

PENELOPE.

I wanted to thank you for getting Dickie such a splendid patient.

DICKIE.

[Hastily, seeing her look of astonishment.] I've just been telling my wife about Mrs. Mack.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

[Not in the least understanding.] Oh, yes.

DICKIE.

It was really awfully good of you to tell her to send for me. I've been to see her this afternoon.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

[Understanding.] Oh, yes. I like to do all I can for people. I hope you'll find her a nice patient.

PENELOPE.

She seems to require a lot of visits.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Yes, she was only telling me the other day how much she liked Dr. O'Farrell. I'm afraid she's very ill, poor dear.

DICKIE.

To tell you the truth, I'm extremely worried about her.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

It's a great comfort to all her friends to know that Dr. O'Farrell is looking after her.

BARLOW.

I've been wondering if she's one of the Staffordshire Macks or one of the Somersetshire Macks.

DICKIE.

I don't know at all.

BARLOW.

How d'you mean you don't know at all? She must be one or the other.

DICKIE.

I don't see that it matters either way.

PENELOPE.

What is she like?

DICKIE.

Oh, I don't know. Like everybody else, I suppose.

PENELOPE.

Don't be silly, Dickie. You must know if she's fat or thin.

DICKIE.

[_ Looking at _ MRS. FERGUSSON.] I should say fat, wouldn't you?

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Obese.

PENELOPE.

Yes?

DICKIE.

She has grey hair.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

All in little corkscrew curls.

DICKIE.

[Laughing.] Yes. I wonder how she does them.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

She has very pretty blue eyes, hasn't she?

DICKIE.

Yes, very pretty blue eyes.

PENELOPE.

What is her Christian name?

DICKIE.

Er--I don't know at all.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

[Promptly.] Catherine.

PENELOPE.

Catherine Mack? Mother, it's your old friend Catherine Mack. What an extraordinary coincidence!

GOLIGHTLY.

Catherine Mack. Why, of course, I remember her perfectly. Little grey corkscrew curls and very pretty blue eyes.

PENELOPE.

Wouldn't she like mamma to go and see her?

DICKIE.

I'm afraid she can't see any one just yet.

GOLIGHTLY.

You must tell her how sorry we are to hear she's so ill.

DICKIE.

Oh, yes, I'll give her any message you like.

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

[_Rather stiffly, getting up._] I think I ought to be going. Will you come, Charles?

GOLIGHTLY.

Yes, my dear.

PENELOPE.

Good-bye, mother, darling.

[_They talk aside as_ MRS. GOLIGHTLY _is helped on with her cloak_.
DICKIE _is left practically alone with_ MRS. FERGUSSON.

DICKIE.

[_In an undertone._] I say, what the dickens have you come here for now?

MRS. FERGUSSON.

You didn't tell me when I should see you to-morrow.

DICKIE.

Good heavens, you might have rung me up on the telephone.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Oh, I never trust the telephone.

DICKIE.

How do you mean you never trust the telephone? Are you in the habit....

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Dickie!

DICKIE.

I beg your pardon, I didn't mean that.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Why on earth did you invent that cock-and-bull story about Mrs. Mack?

DICKIE.

I didn't. It invented itself. I was obliged to account for my movements.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

D'you mean to say your wife asks you where you've been and where you're going? How like a woman. [Innocently.] By the way, what are you doing this evening?

DICKIE.

[With amusement.] Oh, Penelope and I are dining at the Carlton grill room, and going to a music hall.

[BARLOW _comes up to them_.

BARLOW.

Good-bye, Mrs. Fergusson.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

[Effusively.] Good-bye.

BARLOW.

[To PENELOPE, as he shakes hands with her.] Devilish fine woman.

PENELOPE.

[Pretending to be outraged.] Uncle Davenport!

BARLOW.

Good-bye, dear. Quite a lady.

PENELOPE.

Good-bye.

[BARLOW and MRS. GOLIGHTLY go out.]

GOLIGHTLY.

[As he is following.] Are you all right?

PENELOPE.

Yes, leave it to me. I'm beginning to feel my feet.

GOLIGHTLY.

[With a smile.] I noticed it.

[GOLIGHTLY goes out.]

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Charming man your uncle is, Penelope. So distinguished.

PENELOPE.

You've made a conquest of him. He told me you were a devilish fine woman.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Not really? Men often tell me I'm a womanly woman.

PENELOPE.

I daresay it means the same thing.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

But I must fly too. I really had no idea it was so late.

PENELOPE.

Are you doing anything to-night?

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Oh, no! I live very quietly. There's nothing that I enjoy more than an evening all by myself, with a book.

PENELOPE.

You used to be so fond of going out.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

I know that my husband prefers me to remain at home. And when I think of him bravely serving his country in a foreign land I have no heart for gaiety.

PENELOPE.

What a charming nature you have.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

[_To_ DICKIE.] My husband's in a man-of-war. He's stationed at Malta, you know. It's so dreadful that my health forces me to remain in England.

PENELOPE.

I wonder if you'd do me a great kindness.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

My dear, I'll always do anything for an old friend.

PENELOPE.

The fact is, I've had a perfectly fiendish headache the whole afternoon.

DICKIE.

[_Triumphant_] I knew there was something the matter with you the moment I came in.

PENELOPE.

We've got a couple of stalls for a music hall to-night. It would be awfully kind of you if you'd go with Dickie instead of me.

[_A look of intelligence passes between_ DICKIE _and_ MRS. FERGUSSON.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

I?

PENELOPE.

Dickie hates going out alone, and I simply can't stir. You can have a jolly little dinner together at a restaurant, and you can go on afterwards.

DICKIE.

Are you really sure you can't go, Pen?

PENELOPE.

It's absolutely out of the question.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Don't you think Dr. O'Farrell ought to stay and look after you?

PENELOPE.

Oh, no! It'll do him good to go out. He's been working so dreadfully hard. This afternoon he had a consultation that lasted nearly an hour.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

[_To_ DICKIE.] Would you like me to come with you?

DICKIE.

I should love it, if it wouldn't bore you.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Then I shall be delighted.

PENELOPE.

Thanks so much. But it's getting very late. I think you ought to start at once.

DICKIE.

You're sure you don't mind my leaving you, Penelope?

PENELOPE.

Positive.

DICKIE.

Well, just wait a moment, and I'll make you up a dose of something.

PENELOPE.

[_Hastily_] Oh, no, I promise you I'm much better without medicine.

DICKIE.

Nonsense. Of course I must give you something.

[_He goes out._

MRS. FERGUSSON.

That's the advantage of having a doctor in the family.

PENELOPE.

[_Crossly_] Yes, it's a great advantage.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

I do envy you, having your husband always at hand. When I think of mine bravely serving his country--and you know, every doctor I go to tells me it would be most dangerous for me to join him.

[DICKIE _comes in with a little medicine glass, filled with a milky fluid_.

DICKIE.

Here it is.

PENELOPE.

Oh, no, Dickie, I'd much rather not.

DICKIE.

Don't be silly, darling. This'll pull you together like anything.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

I'm sure she ought to lie down.

PENELOPE.

No, I think I'd rather stand up if you don't mind.

DICKIE.

How extraordinarily unreasonable you are! Now lie down on this sofa.

PENELOPE.

Of course, if I absolutely must.

[_She lies down on a sofa._

MRS. FERGUSSON.

We must make you comfortable before we go.

DICKIE.

Let's put all the cushions behind her. Is that nice?

PENELOPE.

Yes, thank you.

DICKIE.

Poor little thing.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

I'm sure she ought to have something over her feet.

DICKIE.

Let's put this rug over her feet. There. Now take this medicine....
There....

PENELOPE.

Oh, no, Dickie. I'll take it after you've gone. I really will. I promise
you I'll take it.

DICKIE.

Why on earth can't you take it now?

PENELOPE.

Well, I hate making faces before you.

DICKIE.

But I've often seen you make faces.

PENELOPE.

Yes, at you. That's quite a different thing.

DICKIE.

Now, take it like a good girl.

PENELOPE.

After you've gone.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

[With great determination.] I'm not going to stir from this room till you've taken it.

PENELOPE.

[Resigned.] Give it me. Hold my nose, Dickie.

[She swallows it and makes a face.]

Oh, I wish I'd never married you, Dickie.

DICKIE.

It'll make you feel like one o'clock.

PENELOPE.

I don't want to feel like one o'clock.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Good-bye. So sorry you're feeling seedy.

DICKIE.

Good-bye, darling.

PENELOPE.

I hope you'll have an awfully good time.

[DICKIE and MRS. FERGUSSON go out. PENELOPE springs up, throws the cushions angrily aside, makes one or two quick steps towards

the door as though to call them back, then stops_.

PENELOPE.

No, I won't. I won't.

[_She comes slowly back, then sinks down and bursts into tears._

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

THE SECOND ACT

SCENE: DR. O'FARRELL'S _consulting-room. It is a comfortably furnished room, with engravings on the walls, photographs in silver frames, and flowers on the chimney-piece. There is a large desk on one side, with papers on it, books, and a reading-lamp. There is a revolving-chair for _DICKIE_ to sit in, and a chair on the other side of the desk for the patient. On a side table are a microscope, a stand for test tubes, one or two medicine bottles, a row of large bottles containing chemicals, and an electric lamp. There is a sofa without arms for patients to lie upon, and there are two or three chairs besides. On the shelves are medical books. On a little table is a pile of "Lancets." _

DICKIE _is sitting at his desk, with his stethoscope still in his ears. A patient is standing up, buttoning up his braces. He puts on his waistcoat and coat as the conversation proceeds. He is a very timid little man, with a bald head and gold spectacles. He has an intensely nervous, apologetic manner._

DICKIE.

I'll just write you out a prescription, shall I?

PATIENT.

Oh, it's too good of you. I'm afraid I'm giving you so much trouble.

DICKIE.

Not at all. Now what would you like me to give you?

PATIENT.

[_Dreadfully embarrassed._] Oh, whatever you like, please. It's too good

of you.

DICKIE.

You know, there's not much the matter with you.

PATIENT.

Oh, I'm so sorry. I really, really....

DICKIE.

I should have thought you'd be rather pleased.

PATIENT.

[_Apologetically._] Yes, of course, I'm very much pleased. I didn't mean that. I've taken up so much of your time.

DICKIE.

It's only out of the people who've got nothing the matter with them that I make a living. The people who are ill either get well or die, and that's the end of them.

PATIENT.

Yes, I see. I never thought of that. Beautiful day it is, isn't it?

DICKIE.

Won't you sit down?

PATIENT.

Oh, it's too good of you. Thank you, thank you. I'm afraid I'm taking up so much of your time.

DICKIE.

I always make my patients sit on the other side of my desk since one of them suddenly saw a snake on me, and flung himself at my throat in order to save me from being bitten. He nearly throttled me in the process, and when I knelt on his chest, he said I was an ungrateful devil, and he wouldn't interfere with the snakes next time they went for me.

PATIENT.

[_Extremely agitated._] Oh, but you don't think there's any danger of my

flying at your throat, do you?

DICKIE.

[_With a laugh._] No, of course not.

PATIENT.

I drink nothing for my luncheon, and only claret and water for my dinner.

DICKIE.

I suppose you wouldn't think you'd had your money's worth if I gave you no medicine?

PATIENT.

Oh, it's too good of you, but I think, for my wife's sake, I'd like to take something.

DICKIE.

Well, look here, I've given you some strychnine to buck you up, and some bismuth to quiet you down. Take it three times a day after meals.

PATIENT.

Oh, thank you so much. I'm sure it's just what I want. And now--er. And now--er....

[_He gets up, overcome with embarrassment._]

DICKIE.

I think there's nothing more I can do for you.

PATIENT.

No, er--thank you very much. I--er--it's so good of you to have taken so much trouble. Yes, er....

DICKIE.

[_Understanding._] Oh.... My fee is two guineas.

PATIENT.

[_Infinitely relieved._] Oh, thank you so much. That's just what I

wanted to ask you. Shall I write you a cheque?

DICKIE.

We always prefer to have it in hard cash, you know, in case it's a bogus cheque.

PATIENT.

Oh, certainly. It's too good of you. I thought you mightn't like it.

DICKIE.

It's extraordinary how nervous people are about giving a doctor money.
If you only knew how jolly glad he is to get it.

PATIENT.

Yes. Thank you very much.

[_The patient takes two guineas out of his pocket and puts them nervously on the chimney-piece._

DICKIE.

Hang it all, man, not on the mantelpiece. There are limits.

PATIENT.

Oh, I beg your pardon. I'm so sorry.

DICKIE.

We always like it put on the desk.

PATIENT.

I don't often come and consult doctors.

DICKIE.

I can see that. If you did you'd probably give me two pounds and say you hadn't got two shillings on you, especially if you were a woman.

PATIENT.

You don't say so. Really it never occurred to me.

DICKIE.

Thank you. Well, good-bye.

PATIENT.

Good-bye, and thank you so much. Beautiful day, isn't it? Good-bye.

[DICKIE _leads him to the door and shows him out. At the door he sees_ GOLIGHTLY.

DICKIE.

Hulloa! Come in, won't you? [_Calling upstairs._] Pen, here's your noble parent.

[GOLIGHTLY _comes in_.

GOLIGHTLY.

I was just going up to see Pen.

DICKIE.

Come and sit down here, and we'll have a smoke.

GOLIGHTLY.

Aren't you expecting patients?

DICKIE.

Oh, it's just on five o'clock. I don't suppose any one else will come. We might have tea down here.

GOLIGHTLY.

How are things going?

DICKIE.

Rotten. Look here, a wretched two guineas. That's all I've made this afternoon.

[PENELOPE _comes in_.

PENELOPE.

Well, father?

GOLIGHTLY.

Kiss your noble parent, my child. You've got a new dress on.

PENELOPE.

I rather like it, don't you?

DICKIE.

Is that another new frock, Pen?

PENELOPE.

Yes, darling. Why?

DICKIE.

Oh, nothing.

PENELOPE.

The wife of a fashionable physician has to spend a lot of money on her clothes.

GOLIGHTLY.

Dickie was lamenting that times were very bad.

DICKIE.

What can you expect with this beastly weather! Fine, dry, cold day after day. We haven't had a fog this autumn. It doesn't give one a chance. Of course everybody keeps well. Times are getting worse and worse. Everybody has decent drains now. An officious Government gives people pure water. If it weren't for patent medicines and the malade imaginaire half the doctors in London would starve.

PENELOPE.

Never mind, Dickie. There may be a motor accident just outside our front door one of these days.

DICKIE.

It would be just like my luck if they were all killed outright. No, what I want is a really good epidemic, a very complicated form of influenza that'd keep people on their backs for about a month.

PENELOPE.

And supposing I got it?

DICKIE.

Well, if you got it that bounder on the other side of the street would have to treat you. And he couldn't charge you as you're my wife, and he'd simply grind his teeth at having to waste his time.

PENELOPE.

The bounder on the other side of the street is Dr. Rogers. I like him much better than Dickie.

DICKIE.

Pompous ass.

PENELOPE.

He's got such a pleasant bedside manner.

DICKIE.

You've never seen my bedside manner. [Looking at his hands.] I say, I must just go and wash my hands, they're covered with Picric Acid.

[Exit.]

PENELOPE.

Where's mother? Converting the heathen?

GOLIGHTLY.

From the safe distance of the Albert Hall.

PENELOPE.

[With a change of manner.] I'm glad you came alone.

GOLIGHTLY.

Is anything the matter?

PENELOPE.

[Breaking out.] I can't go on with it any longer. I've come to the end

of my strength.

GOLIGHTLY.

Is Dickie still ...?

PENELOPE.

Yes. I can't imagine what he sees in her. I sit and watch her sometimes and wonder what she has that I haven't got. You don't think I'm plain, do you?

GOLIGHTLY.

Certainly not. If you had been I should have exposed you at your birth, like the ancient Spartans.

PENELOPE.

There are lots of men who are willing to tell me that I'm extremely attractive.

GOLIGHTLY.

Why don't you let them?

PENELOPE.

My dear father, you're the most immoral parent I've ever come across.

GOLIGHTLY.

[_With a little deprecatory shrug._] It might be politic.

PENELOPE.

[_Shaking her head._] No, I don't know whether I shall ever get Dickie back again, but I don't want to get him back by exciting his jealousy. I don't want his love if I can only have it by making him think other men are in love with me.

GOLIGHTLY.

Remember that two and two never make five.

PENELOPE.

[_Impatiently._] It's easy enough to give advice. You've only got to sit still and watch. I've got to do things. And the worst of it is that

doing things means doing nothing.

GOLIGHTLY.

My dear.

PENELOPE.

Now, father, don't look as if you didn't understand or I shall throw something at your head. It wouldn't be so bad if I could be up and doing, but I just have to sit still and keep my temper. You don't know what I've suffered this month with a smiling face. I've laughed while my heart ached. I've chaffed Dickie when I've known he was just going to meet Ada Fergusson. I've arranged little parties so that they might be together. I haven't even dared to cry by myself in case Ada Fergusson should see that my eyes were red and tell Dickie. He's seen her every day, every single day for the last month, and all the time I've been cheerful and pleasant and amusing.

GOLIGHTLY.

But how does he manage to get the time?

PENELOPE.

Of course he's been neglecting his practice. He's sent his assistant to people he ought to have seen himself. You remember Mrs. Mack, don't you?

GOLIGHTLY.

[_Smiling._] The imaginary Mrs. Mack? Yes.

PENELOPE.

If you knew how I hated Mrs. Mack! She's been having operations. She has an operation about once a week, and Dickie goes off for the whole day in his car.

GOLIGHTLY.

She must have the constitution of a boa-constrictor.

PENELOPE.

And the curious thing is that she always has an operation when there's a race meeting. She had an operation for the Duke of York's Stakes at Kempton; and she had another operation for the Cesarewitch, and a third for Sandown.

GOLIGHTLY.

How very singular.

PENELOPE.

It is till you know that Ada Fergusson adores racing. And the thing that makes me so furious is that I'm quite certain Dickie puts on her money for her; and when her horse wins she pockets the profits, and when it loses she doesn't pay her stake.

GOLIGHTLY.

That sounds very nasty of her. What makes you think it?

PENELOPE.

I do it myself.... Poor Dickie, it's going to cost him a lot of money this month.

GOLIGHTLY.

Why?

PENELOPE.

Because whenever he goes out for the day I have to console myself by buying something. I generally choose something rather dear.

GOLIGHTLY.

I don't remember that I advised that in the treatment of a volatile husband.

PENELOPE.

No, I added it of my own accord.

GOLIGHTLY.

But why did you send for me to-day?

PENELOPE.

Because the end has come. And I can't stand it any longer. This morning Dickie said that Mrs. Mack was well enough to be moved, and he was going to take her over to Paris to put her in the Riviera train.

GOLIGHTLY.

Do you mean to say that....

PENELOPE.

[_With an angry shrug of the shoulders._] Ada Fergusson wants a little jaunt in Paris.

GOLIGHTLY.

What are you going to do?

PENELOPE.

I'm going to tell him he must choose between us. I'm going to do everything I can to prevent him from going. And I mean to let him know that if he goes it's the end.

GOLIGHTLY.

Oh!

PENELOPE.

Don't say oh! Say I'm quite right. Say it's the only thing to do.

GOLIGHTLY.

But I think you're quite wrong.

PENELOPE.

Wrong!

GOLIGHTLY.

You don't suppose he wants to go to Paris. No man in his senses would take the risk.

PENELOPE.

Then why is he going?

GOLIGHTLY.

Because she's making him. And once a woman in these circumstances makes a man do what he doesn't want to, it's the beginning of the end.

PENELOPE.

How d'you know?

GOLIGHTLY.

I don't know. I guess it.

PENELOPE.

It seems to me that a lifetime spent in the study of mathematics has resulted in some very various knowledge.

GOLIGHTLY.

Be a good girl, Pen, and let them go.

[_ There is a pause while _ PENELOPE, _ resting her face on her hands, looks straight at her father. She thinks the matter out._

PENELOPE.

You were right when you said I should want a great deal of tact, and a great deal of patience, and a great deal of self-control. My word!

GOLIGHTLY.

[_ Smiling._] Well?

PENELOPE.

I'll do nothing. I'll hold my tongue, I'll smile, I'll make jokes, but....

GOLIGHTLY.

Yes?

PENELOPE.

I want some hats badly. I'll just go and ring up Françoise and tell her to send me all she's got in the shop.

[DICKIE _comes in_.

GOLIGHTLY.

I was just going.

DICKIE.

I'm sorry. Why so soon?

GOLIGHTLY.

I promised to fetch my wife.

PENELOPE.

You must come back. This is the first time I've been separated from Dickie since our marriage, and I shall want to hide my head in the maternal bosom while my noble father pats my hand.

DICKIE.

I wish you wouldn't take it so calmly, Pen. You might be a bit cut up.

PENELOPE.

But, darling, I'm making every preparation to have fit after fit of violent hysterics. I can't do more.

DICKIE.

Rot me, that's right.

PENELOPE.

[With meaning.] After all, Dickie, I know you wouldn't go if you could help it. It's only because you feel it's your duty, isn't it?

[DICKIE _is rather uncomfortable, but says nothing_. GOLIGHTLY _breaks the momentary silence_.

GOLIGHTLY.

Why are you going by night?

DICKIE.

[Relieved.] Oh, you see, there's so much less of a crowd. It's more convenient when you're carting an invalid about.

PENELOPE.

[Gaily.] It'll be great fun, because you'll see all the gay young men who are making a little excursion to Paris with the object of their affections. I'm told they always go by night so that no one should see them on the journey.

GOLIGHTLY.

Well, I must be getting on or I shall be late. Au revoir.

PENELOPE.

Don't be too long, father, in case my emotions get the better of me before you come back.

GOLIGHTLY.

[Nodding.] I may see you later, Dickie.

[He goes out. PENELOPE makes as if to follow him.

PENELOPE.

I'm going upstairs to have tea.

DICKIE.

[Rather stiffly.] I'd like to have a little talk with you, Pen.

PENELOPE.

Then come up into the drawing-room.

DICKIE.

I'd rather talk to you down here.

PENELOPE.

[Sitting down.] Very well. Talk.

DICKIE.

You can send for the tea if you like.

PENELOPE.

No; I'll let it stand and ruin my digestion.

DICKIE.

[Taking papers out of his pocket and giving them to PENELOPE.] D'you know what these are?

PENELOPE.

[_With a charming smile._] Bills, darling?

DICKIE.

I can see they're bills, thank you!

PENELOPE.

[_Flourishing one of them._] This is for the frock I've got on. You wouldn't think it cost so much, would you? [_Looking down at it._] You see, you have to pay for the cut.

DICKIE.

[_Trying to keep his temper._] And what do you expect me to do with them?

PENELOPE.

[_Indifferently._] You can put them in the waste-paper basket if you like, but it would be shorter to pay them.

DICKIE.

[_Flying into a passion._] Now, look here, Pen. It's perfectly preposterous. You know I'm not going to stand this sort of thing.

PENELOPE.

[_Apparently much astonished, quite good-humouredly._] Darling, you're not going to make a scene for a few little things I've bought myself. I was positively in rags, and I thought you liked me to dress neatly.

DICKIE.

Hang it all, I'm a poor man, and you've spent more than a hundred and fifty pounds in this one month.

PENELOPE.

[_Calmly._] Does it come to as much as that? It's lucky you've got such a good patient in Mrs. Mack, isn't it?

[_He gives her a suspicious look, but to get away from_ MRS. MACK
breaks out angrily.]

DICKIE.

Senseless extravagance I call it. Now look here, here's thirty-five pounds for a dress in blue cloth--absurd price to pay--on 9th of October.

PENELOPE.

Duke of York's Stakes at Kempton.

DICKIE.

How d'you mean, Duke of York's Stakes at Kempton?

PENELOPE.

I just happen to remember they were on that day because Madame Claude was so surprised to see me. It was only by the merest chance that she hadn't gone to the races herself.

DICKIE.

But what on earth put it into your head to go and buy a blue cloth dress?

PENELOPE.

[_Sweetly._] Well, you see, darling, it was the day of the first operation that was performed on Mrs. Mack. And you were away all day, and I felt awfully depressed and lonely. And I knew how anxious you were, and it made me anxious, so I just went and ordered a blue cloth to cheer myself up a bit.

[DICKIE _looks at her for a moment, then looks down at the bill, is about to speak, but says nothing_. PENELOPE _watches him_.]

DICKIE.

[_Suddenly._] And look here, on the 13th of October there's an ermine stole and a muff.

PENELOPE.

Yes, that was the second operation on poor Mrs. Mack.

DICKIE.

I say, I think it's a bit thick.

PENELOPE.

Well, I had to do something while you were away. And it made me feel so miserable to see everybody driving off with race glasses to Liverpool Street.

DICKIE.

I beg your pardon.

PENELOPE.

You see, the 13th of October was the Cesarewitch.

DICKIE.

And I suppose all the others are to be explained in the same way.
[_ Looking at a bill.] October 22.

PENELOPE.

Sandown Races.

[DICKIE _looks through the bill crossly, but does not speak_.

[_ Innocently._] I wonder why you always had your operations on the same day as an important race meeting.

DICKIE.

I suppose you think it odd?

PENELOPE.

A little.

DICKIE.

Well, it isn't odd at all. It's one of old Peter Marsden's cranky ways.
I told you it was Peter Marsden who did the operations, didn't I?
[PENELOPE _nods_.] The fact is, he's simply mad on racing. And he's lost such a pot of money that he always fixes an important operation for the same day as a race meeting so that he absolutely won't be able to go to it.

PENELOPE.

Funny old thing.

[DICKIE _looks up suspiciously_.

[_With a laugh._] Peter Marsden, not you, darling.

DICKIE.

Now look here, Pen, we'll say no more about these bills. I'll pay them this time....

PENELOPE.

I knew you would.

DICKIE.

But there must be no more of them.

PENELOPE.

I really don't know why you should make such a fuss. After all, you've been earning simply heaps and heaps of money with Mrs. Mack.

DICKIE.

We mustn't count our chickens before they're hatched. I haven't had a penny out of her yet.

PENELOPE.

But now that she's going away you can send in your bill.

DICKIE.

Oh, I couldn't possibly. It would kill her.

PENELOPE.

Don't you think you might risk it?

DICKIE.

I think you're awfully heartless, Pen. You forget that I'm very much attached to the old lady. I look upon her as a friend as well as a patient.

PENELOPE.

Perhaps she'll leave you something in her will. We want a new electric brougham, don't we?

DICKIE.

Oh, I shouldn't accept it. I have the strongest feeling against doctors getting legacies from their patients.

PENELOPE.

Well, you'll be able to charge at least a hundred and fifty pounds for taking her to Paris.

DICKIE.

[_With a start._] Pen!

PENELOPE.

Oh, you made me jump.

DICKIE.

You're not proposing to buy anything more?

PENELOPE.

Well, darling, I know that when I get up to-morrow morning and you're not here, I shall feel dreadfully lonely and depressed.

DICKIE.

[_Interrupting._] Have your sainted mother to stay with you.

PENELOPE.

And it's struck me that I simply haven't got a hat I can wear.

DICKIE.

[_Sternly._] Penelope.

PENELOPE.

[_Persuasively._] It'll make my frocks last so much longer if I have some nice hats. You see, you ring the changes, and people think you have a new gown on.

DICKIE.

And may I venture to inquire how many hats you'll want to overcome your depression?

PENELOPE.

[_Decidedly.] Three.

DICKIE.

I never heard anything so preposterous.

PENELOPE.

Now look here, Dickie, I'm willing to meet you half way; I promise you they shan't cost more than five pounds each. You can afford that out of the hundred and fifty.

DICKIE.

The fact is, Pen, that Mrs. Mack is more a friend than a patient, and she's not so well to do as I thought. I'm proposing to make no charge for accompanying her to Paris.

PENELOPE.

[_Quite firmly.] Oh, no, Dickie, I won't hear of it. You've got a wife to think of--if you died to-morrow I should be totally unprovided for. You have no right to be quixotic. It's not fair to me.

[DICKIE _is just going to answer when_ PEYTON _comes in_.

PEYTON.

A lady wishes to see you, sir.

DICKIE.

[_Irritably.] At this hour?

PEYTON.

It's Mrs. Watson, sir.

DICKIE.

Oh, yes, I know. Show her in.

[_Exit_ PEYTON.

DICKIE.

Thank heaven, there's somebody. I'll get a few guineas out of her at all events. [_ Looking at his case book.] Four visits. That'll be five guineas. By Jove, I want them.

PENELOPE.

What's the matter with her?

DICKIE.

I don't know, but I'm pretending I do. And she probably won't find out.

PENELOPE.

I'll leave you. I must just telephone to some one.

[_ She goes out._ DICKIE _walks up and down irritably. When_ MRS. WATSON _appears he at once puts on his professional manner, and is very bland and affable_. MRS. WATSON _is a little, old lady in black_.

DICKIE.

Well, Mrs. Watson?

MRS. WATSON.

You mustn't mind my coming so late. I know you don't see any one after five, but I'm going away.

DICKIE.

I'm delighted to see you. I promise you that.

MRS. WATSON.

I'm starting for the Riviera with my daughter to-morrow, and I thought I'd like to see you again before I went.

DICKIE.

Of course. And how have you been getting on?

MRS. WATSON.

[_ With the keenest satisfaction._] Oh! I don't get on. I never get better.

DICKIE.

Have you been taking your medicine regularly?

MRS. WATSON.

[_Cheerfully._] Yes; but it doesn't do me any good.

DICKIE.

Let's try your knee jerks, shall we?

[MRS. WATSON _crosses one leg over the other, and_ DICKIE _taps below the knee; the leg is slightly jerked up_.

DICKIE.

That seems right enough.

MRS. WATSON.

Sir Benjamin Broadstairs tried everything, and he couldn't cure me; and then I went to Sir William Wilson, and he told me not to do any of the things that Sir Benjamin Broadstairs told me to do, and I got worse and worse!

DICKIE.

You seem uncommonly cheerful about it.

MRS. WATSON.

I've been to every doctor in London, and they all say I'm a wonderful case. I like being examined by doctors, and they take such an interest in me. The hours and hours they've spent over me. I can never be grateful enough for all the kindness I've had from them.

DICKIE.

It's very nice of you to say so. I think I'll try you on something else to-day.

MRS. WATSON.

Oh! make it nice and strong; won't you, doctor?

DICKIE.

You seem to like your medicine with some body in it.

MRS. WATSON.

Well, I like taking medicines. It's something to do; and now my daughter's married I'm very much alone. I think I've taken every medicine in the Pharmacopœia, and they've none of them done me any good.

DICKIE.

[Handing her a prescription.] Well, perhaps this will. You must take it three times a day before meals.

MRS. WATSON.

[Looking at it.] Oh! but I've had this before, Dr. O'Farrell. Sir Arthur Thomas gave me this only a few months ago.

DICKIE.

Well, try it again. Perhaps you didn't give it a fair chance.

MRS. WATSON.

I was reading in the Lancet the other day that a German doctor had discovered a new medicine which does nerve cases such a lot of good. I'm sure it's the very thing for me.

DICKIE.

What on earth were you reading the Lancet for?

MRS. WATSON.

Oh, I always read the Lancet and the British Medical Journal. You see, my poor husband had to take them in for his practice.

DICKIE.

[With a gasp.] You don't mean to say your husband was a doctor?

MRS. WATSON.

Oh, I thought I told you that I was a doctor's widow.

[DICKIE tries to master his agitation while MRS. WATSON prattles on.]

MRS. WATSON.

I can never bear to hear doctors spoken badly of. They never do me any good, but they've been kindness itself. I've only once been rudely treated, and that--if you'll believe it--was by a mere nobody. I told him all my symptoms, and he said to me, Madam, can you eat? Yes, I said. I have breakfast in the morning and a little soup at eleven o'clock; and then I have lunch, and I always make a good tea, and I eat a little dinner at half-past seven, and before I go to bed I have some bread and milk. Then he said, Madam, can you sleep? Yes, I said, for an old woman I sleep very well; I sleep eight or nine hours regularly. Then he said, Madam, can you walk? Oh! yes, I said, I always make a point of walking four miles a day. Then he said, My opinion is that you've got nothing the matter with you at all. Good afternoon.

DICKIE.

Fancy.

MRS. WATSON.

Well, I just looked him up and down, and I said to him, Sir, your opinion is not shared by Sir Benjamin Broadstairs, or Sir William Wilson, or Sir Arthur Thomas. And I didn't even offer him a fee, but I just swept out of the room. [_Archly.] You won't give me that new medicine?

DICKIE.

Honestly, I don't think it's quite what you want.

MRS. WATSON.

Very well. I expect you know best. And now I mustn't take up any more of your time.

DICKIE.

[_Sarcastically_] Oh, it's of no value, thank you.

MRS. WATSON.

[_Persuasively_] Will you tell me what I owe you?

DICKIE.

Oh, as a doctor's widow, of course, I couldn't dream of accepting a fee.

MRS. WATSON.

That is kind of you. But you must allow me to give you a little present.

DICKIE.

[_Rather feebly, but brightening up a little._] Oh, really, you know....

MRS. WATSON.

I've seen every doctor in London of any importance, and they've none of them charged me a penny, but I always make them a little present. I know that you doctors have to go out in all weathers, and you never wrap yourselves up. So I give them a woollen comforter.

[_She takes out of her bag a large red woollen comforter._]

DICKIE.

[_Blankly._] Oh, thank you very much.

MRS. WATSON.

I made it myself.

DICKIE.

Did you!

MRS. WATSON.

And Sir Benjamin promised to wear his every winter. You'll find it so warm.

DICKIE.

I'm very grateful to you.

MRS. WATSON.

And now, good-bye, and thank you so much.

DICKIE.

When you come back from the Riviera, you might do worse than consult Dr. Rogers. He lives just at the other end of the street, you know. He's very good in cases like yours.

MRS. WATSON.

Thank you so much.

DICKIE.

Good-bye.

[_ She goes out, and he shuts the door. He runs to the other and calls out._

DICKIE.

Pen! Pen!

PENELOPE'S VOICE.

Yes.

[_ There is a knock at the door._

DICKIE.

[_ Irritably._] Come in.

[MRS. WATSON _enters_.

MRS. WATSON.

I knew there was something I wanted to ask you particularly, and I nearly forgot it. Sir Benjamin Broadstairs said I ought never to eat anything but toast, and Sir William Wilson said he didn't think toast was at all good for me, and I only ought to eat bread. Now, I wonder what I had better do?

DICKIE.

[_ Seriously, as if he were deliberating._] Well, if I were you, I'd eat bread toasted only on one side.

MRS. WATSON.

Thank you so much. Good-bye. I hope you'll like the comforter.

DICKIE.

I'm sure I shall. Good-bye.

[_ She goes out again, and _ DICKIE _ shuts the door _.

DICKIE.

Pen! Pen!

[PENELOPE _comes in by the other door_.

PENELOPE.

What is the matter?

[DICKIE _goes up to her furiously with the comforter in his hands_.

DICKIE.

Look! That's my fee! That!

PENELOPE.

It's a woollen comforter.

DICKIE.

Don't be idiotic, Penelope. I can see it's a woollen comforter.

PENELOPE.

But what's the meaning of it?

DICKIE.

She's a doctor's widow. Of course I couldn't charge her anything. She kept it dark till to-day. I'll tell you what, doctors' widows oughtn't to be allowed to survive their husbands.

PENELOPE.

Oh!

DICKIE.

When you're my widow, Pen, you go right up one side of Harley Street and then right down the other and see them all.

PENELOPE.

But supposing I'm not ill?

DICKIE.

Hang it all, when you've lost me the least you can do is to enjoy indifferent health.

[PEYTON _comes in_.

PEYTON.

If you please, sir, Mrs. Watson says, may she just see you for one minute.

DICKIE.

[_Resigned._] Yes.

[_Exit PEYTON.

DICKIE.

What the dickens does she want now?

[PEYTON _shows_ MRS. WATSON _in_.

MRS. WATSON.

You'll think you've never seen the last of me.

DICKIE.

[_Blandly._] Not at all. Not at all.

MRS. WATSON.

I've been thinking about what you said about toasting my bread on one side.... On which side shall I put the butter?

DICKIE.

[_With his chin in his hand._] H'm. H'm. You must put the butter on the toasted side.

MRS. WATSON.

Oh, thank you. Now just one more question, do you think a little jam would hurt me?

DICKIE.

No, I don't think a little jam would hurt you, but you mustn't put it on the same side as you put the butter.

MRS. WATSON.

Oh, thank you. Good afternoon. I'm so much obliged.

DICKIE.

Not at all. Not at all.

[MRS. WATSON _goes out_.

DICKIE.

[_Shaking his fist at the door._] Suttee.... That's the word. Suttee.

PENELOPE.

Dickie, what are you talking about?

DICKIE.

I've been trying to think of it for ten minutes. That's what doctors' widows ought to do--Suttee. Like the Hindoos.

PENELOPE.

Burn themselves alive at their husbands' death?

DICKIE.

You've hit it. Suttee. That's the word.

PENELOPE.

But, darling, I should hate to grace your funeral by making a bonfire of myself.

DICKIE.

Oh, you have no affection for me.

PENELOPE.

Lots, but that's asking a great deal, isn't it?

DICKIE.

No, you don't care for me as much as you used to. You're quite different. I've noticed lots of things.

PENELOPE.

[_With a rapid glance at him, but keeping her chaffing manner._] Oh, nonsense.

DICKIE.

You've changed lately. You never come down to see me off in the morning, and you don't ask me at what time I'm coming back. You always used to sit on the arm of my chair after breakfast when I was smoking my pipe and reading the paper.

PENELOPE.

You must have hated it, didn't you?

DICKIE.

Of course I hated it, but it showed you were fond of me, and now that you don't do it any more I miss it.

[PEYTON _comes in, followed by_ MRS. FERGUSSON, _and withdraws_.

PEYTON.

Mrs. Fergusson.

[DICKIE _gives a slight start, and shows faint signs of annoyance. He cannot make out what_ MRS. FERGUSSON _has come for_.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

The maid told me you were here, so I asked her to show me straight in. I hope you don't mind.

PENELOPE.

Of course not. We're delighted to see you anywhere. Won't you have some tea?

MRS. FERGUSSON.

No, thank you. The fact is, I've come to see Dr. O'Farrell professionally.

PENELOPE.

You're not ill?

MRS. FERGUSSON.

I've not been very well lately, and I thought I'd like to see a doctor.
[_To_DICKIE.] Will you treat me?

DICKIE.

I'll do anything I can for you.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

But it must be really a professional visit. You know, I want to pay.

PENELOPE.

Oh, nonsense, Dickie couldn't dream of accepting money from one of my friends.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

No, I've got the strictest principles on that point. I think it's too bad of people to want a doctor to treat them for nothing. I really insist on paying the usual fee.

DICKIE.

Oh, well, we'll discuss that later.

PENELOPE.

I'll leave you alone, shall I?

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Do you mind, dear? It makes me a little uncomfortable to discuss my symptoms before a third party.

PENELOPE.

Of course.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

We shall only be five minutes.

PENELOPE.

I warn you that Dickie's medicines are perfectly beastly.

[_She goes out._

DICKIE.

I'm sorry you're seedy. You were all right yesterday.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

[_Laughing._] I've never been better in my life, thank you.

[DICKIE _is rather taken aback_.]

MRS. FERGUSSON.

That's the advantage of you being a doctor. When I want to see you alone I can do it under your wife's very nose. Don't you think it was rather ingenious?

DICKIE.

[_Dryly._] Very.

[_She gives a little laugh. She gets up and steps cautiously to the door, and suddenly flings it open._

DICKIE.

What on earth are you doing?

MRS. FERGUSSON.

I wanted to see if Penelope was listening.

DICKIE.

[_Rather sharply._] Of course she wasn't listening. That's about the last thing she'd do.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Oh, my dear, don't get in a temper about it. Lots of women do listen, you know.

DICKIE.

Do they? I haven't had the pleasure of meeting them.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Fiddle.

DICKIE.

Then will you tell me in what way I can be of use to you?

MRS. FERGUSSON.

[_Good-humouredly._] Certainly not, if you ask me as crossly as that.
You may kiss my hand. [_He does so._] That's right. Still cross?

DICKIE.

No.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Do you love me as much as ever?

DICKIE.

Yes.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

You wouldn't say no if you didn't, would you?

DICKIE.

No.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Brute!

DICKIE.

[_Rather impatiently._] I say, what on earth have you come for?

MRS. FERGUSSON.

You are nice to me to-day.

DICKIE.

Well, when I left you yesterday we fixed up everything. I gave you your ticket, and I wrote down the time the train started.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Well, for one thing I wanted to see Penelope.

DICKIE.

Why?

MRS. FERGUSSON.

It amuses me to see her simplicity. I get a lot of pleasure in looking at her and thinking how little she suspects what is going on under her very nose. She's the most trusting person I ever met in my life.

DICKIE.

If you want to know anything, it makes me feel devilish uncomfortable.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

My poor, dear boy, what are you talking about?

DICKIE.

It wouldn't be so bad if we had to take any precautions. But she trusts us absolutely. Why, she's always throwing us together. It never enters her head that there can be the least reason for suspicion. It's like knocking a man down who can't defend himself.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

I suppose that means that you no longer love me?

DICKIE.

Of course I love you. Good heavens, I've told you so till I'm blue in the face.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Oh, no, you no longer love me. Men only begin to have scruples when they stop caring for you.

[DICKIE gives a sigh of resignation. This is not the first scene he has had to put up with.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

I've sacrificed everything for your sake. And now you insult me. And when I think of my poor husband bravely serving his country in a foreign land! Oh, it's cruel, cruel!

DICKIE.

But I've only said it made me feel low down to treat Penelope badly.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

You don't think of my feelings. You don't think how I feel. What about my husband?

DICKIE.

Well, you see I don't happen to know your husband, and I do know my wife.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Don't be so stupid. Of course you know your wife.

DICKIE.

That's why I don't like behaving like an utter cad.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

If you really loved me you would think of nothing but me, nothing, nothing, nothing.

[_ She puts her handkerchief to her eyes._

DICKIE.

Oh, I say, don't cry.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

I shall cry. I've never been treated like this before. If you don't love me any more, why don't you say so?

DICKIE.

Yes, I do love you. But....

MRS. FERGUSSON.

But what?

DICKIE.

[_Nervously._] Well--er--I think it would be much better if we--put the

trip to Paris off for a bit.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

[_Gasping with anger._] Oh! Oh! Oh!

DICKIE.

Penelope's so blindly confident.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

I'll never speak to you again. I wish I had never met you. Oh, how can you insult me like this!

[_She begins to sob._

DICKIE.

Oh, Lord! Oh, Lord! I say, don't cry. I didn't mean to be horrid. I'm awfully sorry.

[_He tries to take away her hands from her face._

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Don't touch me. Don't come near me.

DICKIE.

I'll do anything you like if you won't cry. I say, just think if Penelope came in--I was only thinking of the risk to you. Of course, there's nothing I'd like so much as a jaunt over the Channel.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Is that true?

DICKIE.

Yes.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Do you really want me to come?

DICKIE.

Of course I do, if you don't mind the risk.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

[_With a smile._] Oh, I'll make that all right.

DICKIE.

Why, what are you going to do?

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Wait a minute or two and you'll see.

[_She is perfectly composed again, and in high good-humour._

DICKIE.

We might tell Penelope that we're ready.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Very well. [_As_ DICKIE _goes to the door_.] Oh, I quite forgot. I've simply got a head like a sieve.

DICKIE.

What's the matter?

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Well, I almost forgot the very thing I came to see you about. And all through you making a scene.

DICKIE.

Did I make a scene? I wasn't aware of it.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

I want to ask you something. You won't be angry, will you?

DICKIE.

I shouldn't think so.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Of course it's nothing very important really, but it's just a little awkward to ask.

DICKIE.

Oh, nonsense. Of course I'll do anything I can.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Well, a friend of mine on the Stock Exchange gave me a splendid tip,
and....

DICKIE.

It hasn't come off. I know those splendid tips.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Oh, but it's bound to be all right, only there are some differences to
pay. I don't quite understand what it all means, but Solly Abrahams....

DICKIE.

[_ Interrupting. _] Is that your friend on the Stock Exchange?

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Yes, why?

DICKIE.

Oh, nothing. Good old Scotch name, that's all.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Solly says I must send him a cheque for a hundred and eighty pounds.

[DICKIE _gives a slight start, and his face falls_.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

And it's just a little awkward for me to pay that just now. You see my
income is always paid me half-yearly, and I really haven't got a hundred
and eighty pounds in the bank. I never borrow--it's a thing I can't
bear--and I felt the only person I could come to now was you.

DICKIE.

I'm sure that's awfully nice of you, not to say flattering.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

I knew you'd give it me at once, and, of course, I'll pay you back out of my profits.

DICKIE.

Oh, that's very good of you. I'll see what I can do.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Would it be too much trouble if I asked you to write out a cheque now? It'll be such a weight off my mind.

DICKIE.

Of course. I'll be only too glad. By the way, what are the shares called?

[_ He sits down at his desk and writes a cheque._]

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Oh, it's a gold mine. It's called the Johannesburg and New Jerusalem.

DICKIE.

The name inspires confidence.

[_ He gives her the cheque._]

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Thanks, so much. It's awfully good of you. Now just write out a little prescription so as to have something to show Penelope.

DICKIE.

You forget nothing.

[_ He writes._]

MRS. FERGUSSON.

And I must give you a fee.

DICKIE.

Oh, I wouldn't bother about that.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Oh yes, I insist. Besides, it makes it look so much more probable.

[_She looks in her purse._

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Oh, how stupid of me! I've only got a two-shilling bit in my purse. You don't happen to have a couple of sovereigns on you.

DICKIE.

Oh, yes, I think I have. The only money I've earned to-day.

[_He takes them out of his pocket and gives them to__Mrs.
Fergusson_. _She puts them on the desk with a two-shilling piece._

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Thank you.... There. That looks a most imposing fee. You must leave it on there for Penelope to see.

DICKIE.

Shall I call her?

MRS. FERGUSSON.

I will. [_She goes to the door and calls._] Penelope, we've quite done.

DICKIE.

[_Hearing voices upstairs._] Hulloa, there's our Uncle Davenport.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Oh, I met him in the park the other day. He made himself so pleasant. He asked me if I was a Fergusson of Glengary. I didn't know what he meant, but I said I was, and he seemed so pleased.

DICKIE.

You'd better not let him know you were a Miss Jones or he'll have a fit.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Oh, I shall tell him I'm a Jones of Llandudno. I think that sounds rather smart.

DICKIE.

You have what one might politely describe as a remarkable power of invention.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

I don't know about that, but I am a womanly woman, and that's why men like me.

[PENELOPE _and_ BARLOW _come in_.

BARLOW.

Ah, Mrs. Fergusson, this is a delightful surprise.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

You wicked, wicked man, I am told you're such a rake.

PENELOPE.

Uncle Davenport?

BARLOW.

[_Delighted._] Ah, ah. Tales out of school, Mrs. Fergusson.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

If I'd known what a reputation you had I wouldn't have let you talk to me for half an hour in the park.

BARLOW.

[_Bubbling over with delight._] Oh, you mustn't listen to all you hear. A man who goes out as much as I do is sure to get talked about. Our world is so small and so censorious.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Dr. O'Farrell has been writing a prescription for me. I haven't been very well lately.

BARLOW.

Oh, I'm very sorry to hear that. You look the picture of health and extremely handsome.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Oh, you horrid cruel thing! I wanted you to sympathise with me and tell me how ill I looked.

BARLOW.

If you will allow me to call on you I can promise to sympathise with you, but I'm afraid I shall never be able to tell you that you look anything but charming.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

That's too nice of you. You must come and see me the moment I get back from Paris.

[DICKIE _gives a start_

PENELOPE.

Are you going to Paris?

MRS. FERGUSSON.

I came on purpose to tell you. Really, I've got a head like a sieve. Poor Mrs. Mack has asked me if I would go as far as Paris with her. A most unfortunate thing has happened. Her maid's mother has suddenly died, and the poor thing naturally wants to go to the funeral. And so....

PENELOPE.

Mrs. Mack has asked you to go in her maid's place?

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Only for two days, of course. Now, I want to know, dear, tell me honestly, do you mind?

PENELOPE.

I?

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Some women are so funny. I thought you mightn't like the idea of my going with Dr. O'Farrell as far as Paris, and, of course, we shall be travelling back together.

PENELOPE.

What nonsense! Of course, I'm only too glad. It'll be so nice for Dickie to have some one to travel with.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Then that settles it. I like to do everything above board, you know.

BARLOW.

[Seeing the guineas on the desk.] I see you've been raking in the shekels, Dickie.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Oh, that's my fee. I insisted on paying a fee--I particularly want you to know that, Penelope--I'm so scrupulous about that sort of thing.

PENELOPE.

Oh, but Dickie can't accept it. [To DICKIE.] You are a grasping old thing!

DICKIE.

I'm sure I didn't want the money.

PENELOPE.

You really must take it back, Ada.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

[Putting up a defensive hand.] No, I couldn't really. It's one of my principles.

PENELOPE.

I know your principles are excellent, but I really shouldn't like Dickie to accept a fee for seeing my greatest friend.

[PENELOPE _takes up the money and gives it to_ MRS. FERGUSSON.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Oh, well, of course, if you take it like that, I don't know what to do.

PENELOPE.

Put it in your purse and say no more about it.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Oh, it's too good of you.

[_She puts it in her purse._ DICKIE'S _face falls as he sees his own money disappearing_.]

MRS. FERGUSSON.

And now I must really fly. [_Holding out her hand to_ BARLOW.] Good-bye. Don't forget to come and see me, but, remember, I shall expect to hear all about that little ballet-girl.

BARLOW.

[_Delighted to be thought so gay._] You mustn't ask me to be indiscreet.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

[_To_ PENELOPE.] Good-bye, dear.

PENELOPE.

I'll come to the door with you.

[PENELOPE _and_ MRS. FERGUSSON _go out_.

DICKIE.

[_Going to the telephone._] I don't believe you've ever known a ballet-girl in your life.

BARLOW.

No, but it pleases women of our class to think one is hand and glove with persons of that profession.

DICKIE.

Central 1234. If they only knew that nine ballet-girls out of ten go home every night to their children and a husband in the suburbs! I just want to ring up my broker. Is that you, Robertson? I say, d'you know anything about a mine called the Johannesburg and New Jerusalem? Rotten? I thought as much. That's all, thank you. [_He puts on the receiver--to himself, acidly._] A hundred and eighty pounds gone bang.

BARLOW.

Look here, Dickie, now that you have a moment to spare you might give me a little professional advice. Of course, I shan't pay you.

DICKIE.

Good Lord! I might as well be a hospital. I'm not even supported by voluntary contributions.

BARLOW.

The fact is, I've noticed lately that I'm not so thin as I was.

DICKIE.

It can't have required great perspicacity to notice that.

BARLOW.

I'm not asking you for repartee, Dickie, but advice.

DICKIE.

You don't want to bother about a figure at your time of life.

BARLOW.

To tell you the truth, I have an inkling that I've made something of an impression on a very charming lady....

DICKIE.

[Interrupting.] Take my advice and marry her quickly before the impression wears off.

BARLOW.

Strange as it may appear to you, she's a married woman.

DICKIE.

Then don't hesitate--do a bolt.

BARLOW.

What do you mean, Dickie?

DICKIE.

My dear Uncle Davenport, I'm young enough to be your son; philandering with a married woman is the most exaggerated form of amusement that's ever been invented. Take care! That's all I say. Take care!

BARLOW.

Why?

DICKIE.

She'll bind you hand and foot, and put a halter round your neck and lead you about by it. She'll ask you ten times a day if you love her, and each time you get up to go away she'll make a scene to force you to stay longer. Each time you put on your hat she'll pin you down to the exact hour of your next visit.

BARLOW.

But all women do that. It only shows that they like you.

DICKIE.

Yes, I suppose all women do that--except Pen. Pen never bothers. She never asks you if you love her. She never keeps you when you want to get away. She never insists on knowing all your movements. And when you leave her she never asks that fatal, fiendish question, at what time will you be back?

BARLOW.

Well, my boy, if my wife were as indifferent to me as that, I should ask myself who the other feller was.

DICKIE.

What the dickens do you mean by that?

BARLOW.

My dear Dickie, it's woman's nature to be exacting. If she's in love with you she's always a nuisance, and a very charming nuisance too, to my mind. I like it.

DICKIE.

You are not suggesting that Penelope....

BARLOW.

Now, my dear boy, I didn't come to talk to you about Penelope, but about my own health.

DICKIE.

[_Impatiently._] Oh, you've got chronic adiposity. That's all that's the matter with you.

BARLOW.

Good gracious me, that sounds very alarming. And what shall I do for it?

DICKIE.

[_Savagely, very quickly._] Give up wines, spirits and liqueurs, bread, butter, milk, cream, sugar, potatoes, carrots, cauliflowers, peas, turnips, rice, sago, tapioca, macaroni, jam, honey, and marmalade.

BARLOW.

But that's not treatment, that's homicide!

DICKIE.

[_Taking no notice._] Put on a sweater and run round the park every morning before breakfast. Let's have a look at your liver.

BARLOW.

But, my dear Dickie....

DICKIE.

Lie down on that sofa. Now don't make a fuss about it. I'm not going to kill you. [BARLOW _lies down_.] Put your knees up.

BARLOW.

[_As DICKIE feels his liver_.] She's a fine, dashing woman. There's no doubt about that.

DICKIE.

Let yourself go quite loose. Who's a fine, dashing woman?

BARLOW.

Mrs. Fergusson.

[DICKIE _ starts. He gives_ BARLOW _ a look, and then walks away, open-mouthed_.]

BARLOW.

Dickie, Dickie.

[_ Much alarmed he gets off the sofa._

BARLOW.

Is my liver very wrong?

DICKIE.

[_ Completely abstracted._] It's in a beastly state. I thought it would be.

BARLOW.

[_ In tragic tones._] Richard, tell me the worst at once.

DICKIE.

[_ Impatiently._] Don't be such an old donkey. Your liver's as right as mine is. There's nothing the matter with you except that you do yourself too well, and don't take enough exercise.

BARLOW.

[_ With unction._] I suppose one has to pay for being the most popular diner-out of one's time.

DICKIE.

[_ Looking at him sharply._] Is it on Mrs. Fergusson that you've made something of an impression?

BARLOW.

[_ With great self-satisfaction._] My dear fellow, I am the last man to give a woman away.

DICKIE.

Ah!

BARLOW.

Between ourselves, Dickie, do you think Mrs. Fergusson would find it peculiar if I asked her to lunch with me tête-à-tête at the Carlton?

DICKIE.

Peculiar! She'd jump at it.

BARLOW.

Do you think her husband would mind?

DICKIE.

Oh, her husband's all right. He keeps on bravely serving his country in a foreign land.

BARLOW.

It shows that she has a nice nature, or she wouldn't have come to ask Penelope if she minded your going to Paris together.

DICKIE.

Yes, she has a charming nature.

BARLOW.

Lucky dog, I wish I were going to Paris with her.

DICKIE.

[Fervently.] I wish you were.

BARLOW.

Ha, ha. Well, well, I must be running away. I'm dining out as usual. These good duchesses, they will not leave me alone. Good-bye.

[He goes out. DICKIE walks up and down the room thinking. In a moment PENELOPE puts her head in.]

PENELOPE.

I say, darling, oughtn't you to be packing?

DICKIE.

Come in and let's smoke a cigarette together.

PENELOPE.

All right.

[_She takes a cigarette, which he lights for her._

PENELOPE.

I hope you'll have a splendid time in Paris.

[_She sits down._

DICKIE.

You never sit on the arm of my chair as you used to.

PENELOPE.

I'm horribly afraid I'm growing middle-aged. I've discovered how much more comfortable it is to have a chair of my own.

DICKIE.

[_Trying to hide a slight embarrassment._] Weren't you rather surprised when Mrs. Fergusson told you she was going to Paris to-night?

PENELOPE.

Surprised?

[PENELOPE _gives a little gurgle, tries to stifle it but cannot, then, giving way, bursts into peal upon peal of laughter_. DICKIE _watches her with increasing astonishment_.

DICKIE.

What on earth are you laughing at?

PENELOPE.

[_Bubbling over._] Darling, you must think me an old silly. Of course, I knew you were going together.

DICKIE.

[_Thoroughly startled._] I don't know what you're talking about.

PENELOPE.

I have tried not to see anything, but you do make it so difficult.

DICKIE.

[_ Making up his mind to be very haughty._] Will you have the goodness to explain yourself?

PENELOPE.

My dear, of course I know all about it.

DICKIE.

I entirely fail to gather your meaning. What do you know all about?

PENELOPE.

About you and Ada, silly.

DICKIE.

[_ Very haughtily._] Penelope, do you mean to say you suspect me of ...?

PENELOPE.

[_ With an affectionate smile._] Darling!

DICKIE.

[_ Suddenly alarmed._] What d'you know?

PENELOPE.

Everything.

[_ He gives a gasp and looks at PENELOPE anxiously_.]

PENELOPE.

I've been so amused to watch you during the last two months.

DICKIE.

Amused?

PENELOPE.

Upon my word, it's been as good as a play.

DICKIE.

[_Quite at a loss._] Have you known all along?

PENELOPE.

My dear, didn't you see that I did everything in the world to throw you together?

DICKIE.

But I assure you there's not a word of truth in it.

PENELOPE.

[_Good-humouredly._] Come, come, Dickie!

DICKIE.

But why haven't you said anything?

PENELOPE.

I thought it would only embarrass you. I didn't mean to say anything to-day, but I couldn't help laughing when you asked me if I was surprised.

DICKIE.

Aren't you angry?

PENELOPE.

Angry? What about?

DICKIE.

Aren't you jealous?

PENELOPE.

Jealous? You must think me a little donkey.

DICKIE.

You took it as a matter of course? It amused you? It was as good as a

play?

PENELOPE.

Darling, we've been married for five years. It's absurd to think there could be anything between us after all that time.

DICKIE.

Oh, is it? I wasn't aware of that fact.

PENELOPE.

The whole thing seemed to me of no importance. I was pleased to think you were happy.

DICKIE.

[_ Flying into a passion.] Well, I think it's positively disgraceful, Penelope.

PENELOPE.

Oh, my dear, don't exaggerate. It was a harmless peccadillo.

DICKIE.

I'm not talking of my behaviour, but of yours.

PENELOPE.

Mine?

DICKIE.

Yes, scandalous I call it.

PENELOPE.

[_ Quite disappointed.] And I thought it was so tactful.

DICKIE.

Tactful be blowed. You must be entirely devoid of any sense of decency.

PENELOPE.

My dear, I haven't done anything.

DICKIE.

That's just it. You ought to have done something. You ought to have kicked up a row; you ought to have made scenes; you ought to have divorced me. But just to sit there and let it go on as if it were nothing at all! It's too monstrous.

PENELOPE.

I'm awfully sorry. If I'd known you wanted me to make a scene of course I would have, but really it didn't seem worth making a fuss about.

DICKIE.

I've never heard anything so callous, anything so cold-blooded, anything so cynical.

PENELOPE.

You are difficult to please.

DICKIE.

But don't you realise that I've treated you abominably.

PENELOPE.

Oh, no, you've always been the best and most discreet of husbands.

DICKIE.

No, I've been a bad husband. I'm man enough to acknowledge it. And I mean to turn over a new leaf, Penelope; I will give Ada up. I promise you never to see her again.

PENELOPE.

Darling, why should you cause her needless pain? After all, she's an old friend of mine. I think the least I can expect is that you should treat her nicely.

DICKIE.

D'you mean to say you want it to go on?

PENELOPE.

It's an arrangement that suits us all three. It amuses you, Ada has some one to take her about, and I get a lot of new frocks.

DICKIE.

Frocks?

PENELOPE.

Yes, you see, I've been consoling my aching heart by replenishing my wardrobe.

DICKIE.

So you're willing to sacrifice our whole happiness to your frocks. Oh, I've cherished a viper in my bosom. I may have acted like a perfect beast, but, hang it all, I do know what's right and wrong. I have a moral sense.

PENELOPE.

It seems to have displaced your sense of humour.

DICKIE.

Do you know that all these weeks I've been tortured with remorse? I've told myself every day that I was treating you shamefully, I've not had a moment's happiness. I've lived on a perfect rack.

PENELOPE.

It doesn't seem to have had any serious effect on your health.

DICKIE.

And here have you been laughing up your sleeve all the time. It can't go on.

PENELOPE.

Upon my word, I don't see why not?

DICKIE.

We've been mistaken in one another. I'm not the man to stand such a position with indifference. And I've been mistaken in you, Penelope. I thought you cared for me.

PENELOPE.

I dote upon you.

DICKIE.

That's a jolly nice way of showing it.

PENELOPE.

That's just what I thought it was.

DICKIE.

You've outraged all my better nature.

PENELOPE.

Then what do you propose to do?

DICKIE.

I'm going to do the only possible thing. Separate.

PENELOPE.

[Hearing voices in the hall.] Here are papa and mamma. They said they were coming back.

DICKIE.

I hope they'll never find out what a wicked, cruel woman you are. It would send down their grey hairs in sorrow to the grave.

PENELOPE.

But, my dear, they know all about it.

DICKIE.

What! Is there any one who doesn't know?

PENELOPE.

We didn't tell Uncle Davenport. He's such a man of the world, he has no sense of humour.

[PEYTON comes in to announce the GOLIGHTLYS, then goes out .

PEYTON.

Professor and Mrs. Golightly.

[_The_GOLIGHTLYS_come in_.

PENELOPE.

[_Kissing_MRS.GOLIGHTLY.] Well, mother ... Papa, Dickie wants to separate from me because I won't divorce him.

GOLIGHTLY.

That doesn't sound very logical.

MRS.GOLIGHTLY.

What has happened?

PENELOPE.

Nothing's happened. I can't make out why Dickie's so cross.

DICKIE.

[_Indignantly_] Nothing!

PENELOPE.

I didn't mean to say anything about it, but Dickie found out that we knew all about his little love affair.

GOLIGHTLY.

My dear, how tactless of you! A man likes to keep those things from his wife.

DICKIE.

And d'you know the attitude Penelope takes up?

GOLIGHTLY.

She hasn't been making a scene?

DICKIE.

That's just it. Any woman of feeling would make a scene. There must be something radically wrong about her, or she would have wept and stamped and torn her hair.

GOLIGHTLY.

[Mildly.] Oh, my dear boy, don't you exaggerate the enormity of your offence?

DICKIE.

There are no excuses for me.

GOLIGHTLY.

It was a mere trifle. It would show a lamentable want of humour in Penelope if she took it seriously.

DICKIE.

D'you mean to say you agree with her?

GOLIGHTLY.

My dear fellow, we're in the twentieth century.

DICKIE.

Oh! Mrs. Golightly, you spend your time in converting the heathen. Don't you think your own family needs some of your attention?

[PENELOPE, unseen by DICKIE, makes a face at MRS. GOLIGHTLY
to induce her to keep up the scene—

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

A long acquaintance with savage races has led me to the conclusion that man is naturally a polygamous animal.

DICKIE.

My brain reels.

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

I confess I was relieved to hear it was a married woman. It seems to make it so much more respectable.

DICKIE.

It appears to me I'm the only moral man here.

PENELOPE.

Dickie, darling, I haven't been having an affair with the policeman.

DICKIE.

I wish you had. I wouldn't have treated you like this.

PENELOPE.

I thought of it, but I didn't like the colour of his moustache.

DICKIE.

I know I'm to blame. I've behaved like a perfect brute.

PENELOPE.

Oh, nonsense.

DICKIE.

Don't contradict, Penelope. I'm thoroughly ashamed of myself.

GOLIGHTLY.

Come, come!

DICKIE.

I repeat, there are no excuses for me.

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

Poor fellow, he seems quite cut up.

DICKIE.

I haven't a leg to stand on, but, by Jove, I've got a moral sense, and I tell you all that I'm simply outraged. You're overthrowing the foundations of society. Whatever I've done, I've got more respect for the sanctity of the home and the decencies of family life than all of you put together.

[He flings towards the door, stops, and turns round to shake his fist at them.]

DICKIE.

A moral sense. That's what I've got.

[_ He goes out, slamming the door behind him._

PENELOPE.

[_ With a laugh._] Poor darling.

GOLIGHTLY.

What on earth made you blurt it all out?

PENELOPE.

She came here to-day, and I saw that he was sick to death of her....
Mamma, you behaved like a heroine of romance.

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

I shall never forgive myself for the dreadful things you've made me say.

PENELOPE.

Oh, yes, you will, mother. Fast an extra day all through next Lent.
It'll be equally good for your soul and for your figure.

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

Penelope!

PENELOPE.

[_ To _ GOLIGHTLY.] I suddenly felt the moment had come.

GOLIGHTLY.

Take care.

[DICKIE _bursts violently into the room_

DICKIE.

I say, what are these two confounded women doing in the hall?

PENELOPE.

What women? Oh, I know.... [_ She goes to the door. _] Please come in.
They're from Françoise. The Modiste.

[_ The girls come in, laden with hat boxes._

PENELOPE.

You told me I might get a hat or two to console myself for your trip to Paris.

GOLIGHTLY.

Very nice of you, Dickie. That shows you haven't a selfish nature.

[PENELOPE _makes another face at her mother_.

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

You've never given me a free hand to buy hats, Charles.

GOLIGHTLY.

On the other hand, I've never taken little jaunts to Paris without you, my dear.

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

Some women are so lucky in their husbands.

[_Meanwhile the girls have been taking hats out, and_ PENELOPE _puts one on. She is perfectly delighted._

PENELOPE.

Oh, isn't this a dream? [_Looking at the other._] Oh! oh! Did you ever see anything so lovely? Dickie, you are a dear. I'm so glad you're going to Paris.

DICKIE.

[_Furiously._] I'm not going to Paris.

PENELOPE.

What!

DICKIE.

Take all these hats away.

PENELOPE.

But Mrs. Mack?

DICKIE.

Mrs. Mack can go to the devil.

[_He seizes the telephone._

DICKIE.

Hulloa, hulloa. Gerrard 1234. Tell Mrs. Fergusson that Mrs. Mack has had a relapse, and will not be able to go to Paris to-night.

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

THE THIRD ACT

SCENE: PENELOPE'S _boudoir. It is an attractive room, furnished with bright-coloured chintzes, and gay with autumn flowers and great bunches of leaves. There is a large looking-glass. It is a room to live in, and there are books and magazines scattered about. Photographs of _DICKIE_ in every imaginable attitude_.

PEN, _in a ravishing costume, is alone, standing in the middle of the room. She looks at herself in the glass and turns right round, smiling with satisfaction. She preens herself. Suddenly she sees something she does not quite like; she frowns a little, then she makes a face at herself, solemnly and elaborately curtsies, and gaily throws herself a kiss._

PEYTON _comes in, followed by the_ GOLIGHTLYS.

PEYTON.

Professor and Mrs. Golightly.

PENELOPE.

[_Stretching out her arms._] Oh, my sainted mother!

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

[_Out of breath._] I've never climbed up so many stairs in my life.

PENELOPE.

I told Peyton to bring you up here so that no one should come and bother

us. [_With a dramatic gesture._] My noble father!

GOLIGHTLY.

My chiyld!

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

Don't be ridiculous, Pen.

PENELOPE.

Sit down, mamma, and get your breath back, because I'm just going to take it away again.

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

It sounds hardly worth while.

PENELOPE.

Dickie adores me.

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

Is that all?

PENELOPE.

But it's the most surprising, exquisite, wonderful thing in the world, and I'm in the seventh heaven of delight.

GOLIGHTLY.

But has he told you so?

PENELOPE.

Oh, no, we're not on speaking terms at present.

GOLIGHTLY.

Ah, I suppose you express your mutual affection in dumb show.

PENELOPE.

He went out immediately after you left last night, and didn't come home till past twelve. I heard him stop at my door, so I huddled myself under the bed-clothes and pretended to be fast asleep, but I just let my hand

drop carelessly over one side of the bed. Then he gave a tiny little knock, and as I didn't answer he came in, and he crept up on tip-toe, and he looked at me as if--as if he'd like to eat me up.

GOLIGHTLY.

Penelope, you're romancing. How on earth could you know that?

PENELOPE.

[Putting her finger at the back of her head.] I saw him through the back of my head--there. And then he bent down and just touched my hand with his lips. [Showing her hand to GOLIGHTLY.] Look, that's where he kissed it--just on the knuckle.

GOLIGHTLY.

[Gravely looking at her hand.] It seems to have left no mark.

PENELOPE.

Don't be silly. And then he crept softly out again, and I had the first really good sleep I've had for a month. And this morning I had my breakfast in bed, and when I got up he'd gone out.

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

You haven't seen him to-day at all?

PENELOPE.

No, he didn't come in to luncheon.

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

Well, Charles, I'm grateful that you never showed your passion for me by keeping systematically out of my way.

PENELOPE.

But, my dear, it's so simple. Of course, he's in a dreadful temper. I've made him feel a perfect fool, and he hates it. But, good heavens! after five years I know how to deal with him when I've hurt his pride. I'll just give him a chance of saving his face, and then we'll fall into one another's arms and be happy ever afterwards.

[GOLIGHTLY, who has been sitting near a table, draws a sheet of paper towards him and begins, meditatively, to write .

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

But, darling, don't waste the precious hours, do it at once.

PENELOPE.

No, I'm wiser than that. I'm not going to do anything till Ada Fergusson is quite disposed of.

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

Has anything been seen of her?

PENELOPE.

No, but I expect her here every minute.

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

[_With a gasp._] Here?

PENELOPE.

She rang up last night and spoke [_imitating a man's tones_] in a deep voice, like this, so that I shouldn't recognise her. She asked if Dickie was at home, and I said he wasn't. [_Imitating the man's voice again._] Will you ask him to ring up Mrs. Mack as soon as he comes back? Oh! I said, I think he's been at Mrs. Mack's all the evening, and I rang off quickly. And this morning I just took the receiver off, and I think by now Ada must be in a pretty temper.

[_She catches sight of_ GOLIGHTLY _and goes up to look at what he is writing_.]

PENELOPE.

[_Tapping the table sharply with her open hand._] Two and two don't make five, father.

GOLIGHTLY.

I never said they did, darling.

PENELOPE.

Then why are you writing it down?

GOLIGHTLY.

You seem to think they do, my dear; and I have the highest respect for your intelligence.

PENELOPE.

Mamma, if you thought it absolutely necessary to provide a father for your offspring, I wish you had chosen one who wasn't quite so irritating.

[GOLIGHTLY _does not answer, but quietly adds two and two together_. PENELOPE _watches him for a moment_.

PENELOPE.

D'you think I'm a perfect fool, father?

GOLIGHTLY.

Yes, my dear.

PENELOPE.

Why?

GOLIGHTLY.

You're preparing for Dickie once more an uninterrupted diet of strawberry ices.

[PENELOPE _goes up to her father and sits down opposite to him. She takes the pencil out of his hand._

PENELOPE.

Put that down, father, and tell me what you're talking about.

GOLIGHTLY.

[_Joining his hands and leaning back in his chair._] How are you going to keep your husband's love now you have got it back?

PENELOPE.

[_With a nod and a smile._] I'm never going to bore him with demonstrations of affection. I'm never going to ask him if he loves me. And when he goes out I'm never going to inquire at what time he'll be back.

GOLIGHTLY.

[_Calmly._] And what will you do when the next pretty little grass-widow throws herself at his head?

PENELOPE.

[_Rather outraged at the mere thought._] I hope he'll duck and dodge her.

GOLIGHTLY.

[_With a deprecating shrug of the shoulders._] Your mother, from her unrivalled knowledge of heathen races, has told you that man is naturally a polygamous animal.

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

I shall never forgive myself.

PENELOPE.

Do you mean to say I'm to expect Dickie to have flirtations with half a dozen different women?

GOLIGHTLY.

I only see one way to avoid it.

PENELOPE.

And what is that?

GOLIGHTLY.

Be half a dozen different women yourself.

PENELOPE.

It sounds dreadfully exhausting.

GOLIGHTLY.

Remember that man is by nature a hunter. But how the dickens can he pursue if you're always flinging yourself in his arms? Even the barndoors hen gives her lawful mate a run for his money.

[PENELOPE _looks from her father to her mother. She gives a little sigh._

PENELOPE.

It was so easy for me to love, honour, and obey him, and so delightful. It never struck me that I ought to keep watch over my feelings.

GOLIGHTLY.

We all strive for happiness, but what would happiness be if it clung to us like a poor relation?

PENELOPE.

[_ Nodding her head._] Strawberry ice for breakfast, strawberry ice for luncheon, and strawberry ice for tea.

GOLIGHTLY.

Put a Rembrandt on your walls, and in a week you'll pass it without a glance.

PENELOPE.

[_ Pulling out deprecating hands._] Papa, don't batter me with metaphors.

GOLIGHTLY.

[_ With a smile._] Well, you made your love too cheap, my dear. You should have let your husband beg for it, and you made it a drug in the market. Dole out your riches. Make yourself a fortress that must be freshly stormed each day. Let him never know that he has all your heart. He must think always that at the bottom of your soul there is a jewel of great price that is beyond his reach.

PENELOPE.

Do you mean to say that I must be always on my guard?

GOLIGHTLY.

A wise woman never lets her husband be quite, quite sure of her. The moment he is--[_ with a shrug of the shoulders_]--Cupid puts on a top-hat and becomes a churchwarden.

PENELOPE.

[_ Huskily._] D'you think it's worth all that?

GOLIGHTLY.

That is a question only you can answer.

PENELOPE.

I suppose you mean it depends on how much I love Dickie. [_A pause. Tremulously.] I love him with all my heart, and if I can keep his love everything is worth while. [_She rests her face on her hands, and looks straight in front of her. Her voice is filled with tears.] But, oh, father, why can't we go back to the beginning when we loved one another without a thought of wisdom or prudence? That was the real love. Why couldn't it last?

GOLIGHTLY.

[_Tenderly.] Because you and Dickie are man and woman, my dear.

PENELOPE.

[_With a flash of her old spirit.] But my friends have husbands, and they don't philander with every pretty woman they meet.

GOLIGHTLY.

Scylla and Charybdis. The price they pay is satiety. Would you rather have the placid indifference of nine couples out of ten, or at the cost of a little trouble and a little common sense keep Dickie loving you passionately to the end of his days?

PENELOPE.

[_With a roguish twinkle.] You and mamma show no signs of being bored to death with one another.

GOLIGHTLY.

Your sainted mother has been systematically unfaithful to me for twenty years.

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

Charles!

GOLIGHTLY.

She has had an affair with the Additional Curates' Society, and an intrigue with the English Church Mission. She has flirted with Christian Science, made eyes at Homœopathy, and her relations with vegetarianism have left a distinct mark on her figure. How could I help adoring a woman so depraved?

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

[Good-humouredly.] It's monstrous of you to reproach me, Charles, when you have conducted for years a harem of algebraical symbols.

PENELOPE.

[Lifting up her hands in mock horror.] And to think that I never knew how immoral my parents were!

GOLIGHTLY.

[Patting his wife's hand.] I think we must be the lucky ones, dear. We've been married for twenty years....

PENELOPE.

[Interrupting.] Make it a quarter of a century, father. I really can't pass for less than twenty-four.

GOLIGHTLY.

[To his wife.] And we seem to have got on pretty well, don't we?

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

[Affectionately.] You've been very good to me, Charles, dear.

GOLIGHTLY.

We've clomb the hill together....

PENELOPE.

Sh! sh! sh! I cannot allow my parents to flirt in my presence. I never heard of such a thing.

GOLIGHTLY.

We tender our apologies.

PENELOPE.

[Hearing a sound.] Listen. There's Dickie. Father, quickly--what must I do to make him love me always?

GOLIGHTLY.

In two words, lead him a devil of a life.

PENELOPE.

[_ Ruefully.] If you only knew how I want to fly into his arms and forget the wretched past!

GOLIGHTLY.

Don't, but tell him you're going for a motor trip.

PENELOPE.

[_ Her face falling.] Supposing he lets me go?

GOLIGHTLY.

My dear, a merciful providence has given you roguish eyes and a sharp tongue. Make use of them.

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

Charles, I shall be thankful when you return to your mathematics. The morals of that hussy X are already so bad that you can't make them much worse.

PENELOPE.

The fact is, papa, that as a guide for the young you have rather advanced views.

GOLIGHTLY.

[_ With a grotesque, dramatic flourish.] Ungrateful child! And I, like the pelican, have offered you my very heart to dine on.

[DICKIE _comes in. He is a little embarrassed and uncomfortable.]

DICKIE.

May I come in?

PENELOPE.

Yes, do!

DICKIE.

[_ Nodding to the_ GOLIGHTLYS.] How d'you do?

GOLIGHTLY.

[_To his wife.] Are you ready?

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

[_Getting up.] Yes.

DICKIE.

I hope I'm not driving you away.

GOLIGHTLY.

Oh no, we only came in for ten minutes to say good-bye to Penelope.

[DICKIE, _rather puzzled at this, gives_ PENELOPE _a quick look_.

DICKIE.

Are you ...? [_He stops.]

GOLIGHTLY.

I hope you'll enjoy yourself, dear.

PENELOPE.

Oh, I'm sure I shall.

MRS. GOLIGHTLY.

Good-bye, darling.

PENELOPE.

[_Kissing her mother.] Good-bye.

[_She goes to the bell and rings it._

GOLIGHTLY.

We can find our way out. Don't bother about Peyton.

PENELOPE.

I want to speak to her.

GOLIGHTLY.

Oh, I see. [_Nodding to_ DICKIE.] Good-bye.

[_The GOLIGHTLYS go out_. PENELOPE, _with a slight smile, lies down on the sofa and takes up a magazine. She pays no attention to_ DICKIE. _He gives her a sidelong glance and arranges his tie in the glass._ PEYTON _comes in_.]

PENELOPE.

[_Looking up from her magazine._] Oh, Peyton, you might pack up some things for me in that little flat portmanteau of the doctor's. Put my green charmeuse in.

PEYTON.

Very well, ma'am.

PENELOPE.

You can call a cab in half an hour.

PEYTON.

Very well, ma'am.

[_Exit._

DICKIE.

Are you going away?

PENELOPE.

Oh, yes, didn't I tell you?

DICKIE.

[_Stiffly._] No.

PENELOPE.

How stupid of me! You see, I was expecting you to spend two or three days in Paris with Ada, and I arranged to motor down to Cornwall with the Hendersons.

DICKIE.

But I gave up the trip to Paris so as not to annoy you.

PENELOPE.

[_Smiling._] It wouldn't have annoyed me a bit, darling.

DICKIE.

It ought to have annoyed you.

PENELOPE.

In any case I'm afraid I can't throw the Hendersons over. They've made up a little partie carrée so that we can play bridge in the evenings.

[DICKIE _goes up to_ PEN _and sits on the sofa beside her_.]

DICKIE.

Look here, Pen, let's make it up.

PENELOPE.

[_Quite pleasantly._] But we haven't quarrelled, have we?

DICKIE.

[_With a smile._] I don't know whether I want to shake you or hug you.

PENELOPE.

Well, if I were you, I'd do neither.

DICKIE.

[_Taking her hands._] Pen, I want to talk seriously to you.

PENELOPE.

[_Releasing them, with a look at the clock._] Have you time?

DICKIE.

What on earth d'you mean?

PENELOPE.

You generally start off for Mrs. Mack's about now.

[DICKIE _gets up and walks up and down the room_.

DICKIE.

[_Resolutely._] Mrs. Mack's dead.

PENELOPE.

[_Jumping off the sofa._] Dead! When's the funeral?

DICKIE.

The date hasn't been settled yet.

PENELOPE.

Well, now you'll be able to send in your bill.

DICKIE.

[_Nervously._] Pen, Mrs. Mack never existed.

PENELOPE.

[_With a smile._] I never thought she did, darling.

DICKIE.

What!

[PENELOPE _giggles_.

DICKIE.

D'you mean to say you knew all the time that I'd invented her?

PENELOPE.

I thought it was very nice of you to make up a plausible excuse for being away so much.

DICKIE.

Then, when you bought all those things because I was making such a pot of money, you were just pulling my leg.

PENELOPE.

[_With a smile._] Well....

[DICKIE _suddenly bursts into a shout of laughter_.

DICKIE.

[_When he recovers._] I say, you have scored us off. Upon my soul, you are a wonderful little woman. I can't think how I ever saw anything in Ada Fergusson.

PENELOPE.

Oh, but I think she's charming.

DICKIE.

What nonsense! You know you don't. If you only knew the life she led me!

PENELOPE.

I suppose she often asked you if you really loved her?

DICKIE.

Ten times a day.

PENELOPE.

And when you left her, did she want to know exactly at what time you'd come back?

DICKIE.

How did you know?

PENELOPE.

I guessed it.

DICKIE.

[_Going towards her as if to take her in his arms._] Oh, Pen, let's forget and forgive.

PENELOPE.

[_Getting out of his way._] There's nothing to forgive, darling.

DICKIE.

[Making a step towards her.] I suppose you want me to eat the dust.... I have behaved like a perfect brute. I'm awfully sorry, and I'll never do it again.

PENELOPE.

[Eluding him as though by accident.] I daresay the game isn't worth the candle.

DICKIE.

[Trying to intercept her.] Don't speak of it.

PENELOPE.

[Keeping out of his reach.] And I was under the impression you were having such a good time.

DICKIE.

I was feeling awfully conscience-stricken.

PENELOPE.

That's where women have such an advantage over men. Their conscience never strikes them till they've lost their figure and their complexion.

DICKIE.

[Stopping.] I say, what are you running round the room for in that ridiculous fashion?

PENELOPE.

I thought we were playing touch-last.

DICKIE.

Don't be a little beast, Pen. You know you love me, and I simply dote upon you.... I can't do more than I have done.

PENELOPE.

What d'you want me to do?

DICKIE.

I want you to kiss and make friends.

PENELOPE.

[_Quite good-naturedly._] I think you're a little previous, aren't you?

DICKIE.

I suppose you're thinking of Ada Fergusson.

PENELOPE.

I confess she hadn't entirely slipped my mind.

DICKIE.

Hang Ada Fergusson!

PENELOPE.

I think that's rather drastic punishment. After all, she did nothing but succumb to your fatal fascination.

DICKIE.

That's right, put all the blame on me. As if it were men who made the running on these occasions! I never want to see her again.

PENELOPE.

How changeable you are.

DICKIE.

[_Going towards her eagerly._] I'm never going to change again. I've had my lesson, and I'm going to be good in future.

PENELOPE.

[_Getting a chair between herself and him._] Anyhow, don't you think you'd better be off with the old love before you get on with the new?

DICKIE.

Yes, but you might help me.

PENELOPE.

You don't want me by any chance to tell Ada Fergusson that you don't care for her any more?

DICKIE.

It's a devilish awkward thing to say oneself.

PENELOPE.

I can imagine that the best-tempered woman would take it a little amiss.

DICKIE.

I say, can't you suggest something to help me out?

PENELOPE.

[_With a shrug of the shoulders._] My dear, since the days of Ariadne there's only been one satisfactory way of consoling a deserted maiden.

DICKIE.

[_With a jump._] Uncle Davenport!

PENELOPE.

What about Uncle Davenport?

DICKIE.

He told me yesterday he thought she was a devilish fine woman.

PENELOPE.

Oh, no, Dickie, I'm not going to allow you to sacrifice my only uncle.

DICKIE.

I'll just ring him up and tell him she's not gone to Paris.

PENELOPE.

No, Dickie. No, Dickie. No, Dickie!

DICKIE.

[_At the telephone._] Mayfair 7521. I promise you he shall come to no harm. Before it gets serious we'll tell him that she's not a Jones of Llandudno, but a Jones of Notting Hill Gate.

PENELOPE.

[_With a giggle._] I don't think it's quite nice what you're doing.

DICKIE.

I think it's horrid. I shall blame myself very much afterwards.

PENELOPE.

With your moral sense too.

DICKIE.

Hulloa, can I speak to Mr. Barlow? Hulloa, is that you, Uncle Davenport? No, I didn't go to Paris after all. [_With a wink at PENELOPE.] Mrs. Mack had a sudden relapse, and couldn't be moved. No, Mrs. Fergusson hasn't gone either.

[PEYTON _comes in_.

PEYTON.

Mrs. Fergusson is in the drawing-room, ma'am.

DICKIE.

[_Speaking down the telephone._] What! Half a minute. Hold on.

PENELOPE.

I've been expecting her all the afternoon. Ask her if she wouldn't mind coming up here.

PEYTON.

Very well, ma'am.

[_Exit._

DICKIE.

I say, there's no getting out of it. [_At the telephone._] Hulloa. Why don't you come round? Mrs. Fergusson is calling on Pen, and you can arrange about your luncheon party then.... All right. Good-bye.... I say, I'm going to bolt.

PENELOPE.

You coward!

DICKIE.

[Pretending to be very dignified.] I'm not a coward, Penelope. I shall be back in two minutes. But I'm thirsty, and I'm going to have a brandy and soda.

[He bends down to kiss her, but she moves away.]

DICKIE.

I say, hang it all, you needn't grudge me one kiss.

PENELOPE.

[Smiling.] Wait till you're off with the old love, my friend.

DICKIE.

I think it's a bit thick that a man shouldn't be allowed to embrace the wife of his bosom.

PENELOPE.

You shall afterwards, if you're good.

DICKIE.

I say, she's just coming. What a blessing this room has two doors!

[He goes out.] PENELOPE gets up, looks at herself in the glass, arranges a stray lock of hair, and powders her nose_. ADA FERGUSSON _comes in_.

PENELOPE.

[Kissing her effusively.] Dearest ... I hope you don't mind being dragged up here.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Of course not. I like this room. I always think it's just the place for a heart-to-heart talk.

PENELOPE.

How nice you're looking!

MRS. FERGUSSON.

D'you like my frock?

PENELOPE.

I always think it suits you so well.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

[_ Acidly.] It is the first time I have put it on.

PENELOPE.

Oh, then I suppose I've seen one just like it on other people.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

You'll think I'm coming here a great deal, dearest.

PENELOPE.

You know that Dickie and I are always glad to see you.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Is Dr. O'Farrell at home? I wanted to ask him something about the medicine he prescribed for me yesterday.

PENELOPE.

Now don't say you've come to see Dickie. I was hoping you'd come to see me.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

I wanted to kill two birds with one stone.

PENELOPE.

That is a feat of marksmanship which always gives one satisfaction.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

I forget if you said that Dr. O'Farrell was at home.

PENELOPE.

You know, I think you must be the only person who's known him ten minutes without calling him Dickie.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

I should have no confidence in him as a doctor if I did.

PENELOPE.

I never employ him myself. I always go to Dr. Rogers.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

You look as if you had robust health, dearest.

PENELOPE.

Oh, I just manage to trip along above ground to save funeral expenses.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Is Dr. O'Farrell quite well?

PENELOPE.

Tired.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

[_Wondering why._] Oh?

[_A slight pause._]

MRS. FERGUSSON.

I suppose you haven't the least idea when he'll be home?

PENELOPE.

I didn't know he was out.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Oh, I beg your pardon. I thought you said he was out.

PENELOPE.

No.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

I must have misunderstood you.

PENELOPE.

I think he's lying down. You see he was with poor Mrs. Mack till twelve o'clock last night.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

[With a slight start.] Was he?

PENELOPE.

It's so bad that she should have had a relapse when she seemed to be going on so well.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

[Puzzled, but trying not to show it.] I was more distressed than I can say.

PENELOPE.

And it must have been so inconvenient for you after you'd made all your arrangements for going to Paris.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Oh, of course, I didn't think of my convenience at all.

PENELOPE.

Dickie says the way you've nursed her is beyond all praise.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

I think in this life we ought to do what we can for one another. I only did my duty.

PENELOPE.

So few of us do that.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

When I think of my husband bravely serving his country in a foreign land, I feel that I ought to do anything I can to help others.

[PENELOPE _meditatively winks to herself_

PENELOPE.

Were you there at the end?

MRS. FERGUSSON.

[_Astounded._] What end?

PENELOPE.

You don't mean to say you don't know?

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Penelope, I haven't an idea what you're talking about.

PENELOPE.

But Dickie was with Mrs. Mack all this morning.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

That's absurd.

PENELOPE.

I wonder you weren't sent for.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

But....

[_She is speechless with anger and amazement._]

PENELOPE.

Then you really don't know?

MRS. FERGUSSON.

[_Desperately._] I know nothing.

PENELOPE.

My poor, dear Ada. I'm distracted that I should have to give you this bitter, bitter blow. Mrs. Mack is--dead.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Dead!

PENELOPE.

She died in Dickie's arms, thanking him for all he'd done for her.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Impossible!

PENELOPE.

I don't wonder you say that. She was quite frisky a day or two ago....
Sit down, dear. You're quite upset. You were very fond of her, weren't
you?

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Dead!

PENELOPE.

Why don't you have a good cry? Can't you find your handkerchief? Take
this. It's very sad, isn't it? And after all you'd done for her?

[MRS. FERGUSSON _dabs her eyes with the handkerchief_.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

[_Forcing herself to be natural._] It's a great blow.

PENELOPE.

Oh, I know. I feel for you, dear. Dickie was devoted to her. He said
he'd never had such a patient. [_Putting her handkerchief to her own
eyes._] She died, with a smile on her lips, mentioning her dead
husband's name. Dickie was so moved, he couldn't eat any lunch, poor
boy; and we're going to have a new landauette.

[DICKIE _comes in and stops at the door for a moment as he sees the
two women apparently in tears_.]

DICKIE.

I say, what's up?

PENELOPE.

[_With a sob._] I've just broken the news to poor Ada.

DICKIE.

What news?

PENELOPE.

She didn't know that Mrs. Mack was--no more.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

[_Trying to conceal her rage and mystification._] I certainly didn't!

PENELOPE.

You ought to have let her know, Dickie. She would have liked to be--in at the death.

DICKIE.

I wanted to spare you.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

It's too kind of you.

PENELOPE.

I knew that was it. Dickie has such a kind heart.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

[_With restrained anger._] I have already noticed it.

PENELOPE.

[_To her husband._] And you were so fond of her, weren't you?

DICKIE.

I looked upon her as a real friend.

PENELOPE.

I've told Ada that she expired in your arms, darling.

DICKIE.

With a smile on her lips.

PENELOPE.

That's just what I said. Murmuring the name of her husband, who'd been dead for forty years. What did you say the name was, Dickie?

DICKIE.

Walker, darling.

PENELOPE.

Tell Ada more. She wants to hear the details.

DICKIE.

She asked to be remembered to you. She sent her love to your husband.

PENELOPE.

She seems to have thought of everything. You must go to the funeral, Dickie.

DICKIE.

Yes; I should like to show her that sign of respect.

PENELOPE.

[_To_ MRS. FERGUSSON.] Wouldn't you like a glass of sherry, dearest? I can see you're quite upset.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

The--news has taken me by surprise.

PENELOPE.

To tell you the truth, I expected it last night. But I quite understand your emotion.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

I'm so much obliged for your sympathy.

PENELOPE.

I'm going to get you some sherry myself.

DICKIE.

Oh, let me.

PENELOPE.

No, stay with Ada, darling. You have such a way with you when one's in trouble.

DICKIE.

[_Edging off._] On an occasion like this a woman wants another woman with her.

PENELOPE.

[_Preventing him from moving._] No, you know just the right thing to say. I shall never forget how charming you were when our last cook gave notice.

[_She goes out._] MRS. FERGUSSON _springs to her feet_

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Now!

DICKIE.

Good heavens! You made me positively jump.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

What does all this mean?

DICKIE.

It means that Mrs. Mack, like the rest of us, is mortal. The funeral takes place the day after to-morrow at Kensal Green. Friends kindly accept this the only intimation.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

How can Mrs. Mack be dead? You know just as well as I do that she never existed.

DICKIE.

Upon my word, I'm beginning to be not quite certain. I've talked about

her so much that she seems much more real than--than my bank balance, for instance. And I could write a beautiful article for the Lancet on the case.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

[Furiously.] Oh!

DICKIE.

After all, she did have a rotten time of it, poor old lady. Operation after operation. Life wasn't worth living. She was bound to die. And I call it a jolly happy release.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Where were you last night?

DICKIE.

I was at Mrs. Mack's--no, of course, I wasn't. I'm so used to saying that that it slips out quite naturally. I'm awfully sorry.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

How can you tell me such lies?

DICKIE.

I don't know. I suppose it's growing into a habit.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

I recommend you to keep them for Penelope.

DICKIE.

I suppose you think, then, they don't matter?

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Oh, she's your wife. That's quite another story.

DICKIE.

I see.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

What d'you mean by saying, I see?

DICKIE.

It was the only reply I could think of at the moment.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

I'm sure you meant something by it.

[PEYTON _comes in with a tray on which are two wine glasses and a decanter. They keep silence till she has gone out._

DICKIE.

Have a glass of sherry, will you?

MRS. FERGUSSON.

No.

DICKIE.

Well, I think I will if you don't mind. [_He pours himself out a glass._] I have an idea that sherry's coming into fashion again.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Have you?

DICKIE.

I always think I have a knack of making myself pleasant under difficulties.

[_He drinks a glass of sherry to give himself courage._

DICKIE.

Look here, I've got something to tell you that I'm afraid you won't very much like. I daresay you'll think me an awful brute, but I'm bound to say it. [MRS. FERGUSSON _does not answer, and after a moment's pause he goes on_.] The fact is, I'm not built the proper way for intrigue. All these lies make me awfully uncomfortable. I don't like to think I'm treating Penelope badly. [_Another pause._] I may as well tell you the whole truth bang out. I've discovered that I'm desperately in love with Penelope.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

[_Calmly.] And?

DICKIE.

[_Rather surprised.] And that's all.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

And how do you imagine that interests me?

DICKIE.

[_Quite embarrassed.] I thought--er....

[MRS. FERGUSSON _goes into a peal of laughter_. DICKIE, _quite taken aback, looks at her with astonishment_.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

You haven't been under the impression that I ever cared for you?

DICKIE.

[_Trying to make it out._] No, no. Of course a man's a conceited ass who thinks a woman's in love with him.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

You amused me when I first met you, but you've long ceased to do that.

DICKIE.

It's kind of you to say so.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

It was convenient to have some one to do things for me. I'm a womanly woman and....

DICKIE.

You don't know your way about.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

For the last month you've bored me to extinction. I've done everything in my power to show you except say it right out.

DICKIE.

I'm afraid I've been very dense.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Dreadfully dense.

DICKIE.

But it was good of you to spare my feelings.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

[With an amiable smile.] D'you think it would be rude if I described you in your own words as a conceited ass?

DICKIE.

It might make our future acquaintance rather formal.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

There will be no future acquaintance.

DICKIE.

Then there's nothing more to be said.

[MRS. FERGUSSON _sweeps to the door. She stops._

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Does Penelope adore you as blindly as when first I met you?

DICKIE.

I venture to think she's as much in love with me as I am with her.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

What have you done with the letters I wrote to you?

DICKIE.

I did as we agreed. I burnt them at once.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

I didn't. I kept yours.

DICKIE.

I shouldn't have thought they were interesting enough.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

I have an idea that Penelope would find them positively absorbing.

DICKIE.

Why don't you send them to her?

MRS. FERGUSSON.

If you have no objection, I think I will.

DICKIE.

They will tell her nothing that she doesn't know already.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

[_Coming back, startled._] You don't mean to say you've told her?

DICKIE.

Of course not.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Well?

DICKIE.

She's known it all along.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Known what?

DICKIE.

Everything. From the beginning.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

[_Terrified._] How did she find out?

DICKIE.

Heaven only knows.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

It's a trap! I might have known she wasn't such a fool as she seemed.
She wants to divorce you, and she's used me. My husband will never stand
that.

DICKIE.

I can imagine that even the most affectionate husband would draw the
line there.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Oh, don't try and be funny now.

DICKIE.

I wasn't. The funny part is yet to come.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

What?

DICKIE.

Well, you needn't get into a state about it. Penelope's not going to do
anything.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

But then, why ...?

DICKIE.

[With a shrug of the shoulders.] She doesn't care a hang.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

I don't understand.

DICKIE.

Don't you? It's very simple. It's a matter of no importance. She's glad
that I've been amused. If she only knew how much amusement I've got out

of it! She looks upon it in the light of a--of a change of air.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

[_Furiously._] Oh! Oh! Oh! A fortnight's golf at the seaside, I suppose.

DICKIE.

Something like that.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

I'd sooner she divorced you.

DICKIE.

Thanks, I wouldn't.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Oh, what a humiliation! I've been just a convenience because she had other fish to fry. How sordid it makes the whole thing! And I was yearning for romance. I would never have looked at you if I hadn't thought she doted on you.

DICKIE.

I have an idea that affairs of this sort are only romantic when they happen to other people. When they happen to yourself--well, sordid's just the word.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

[_Suddenly remembering._] And Mrs. Mack?

DICKIE.

She's known all about that too.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

D'you mean that to-day when we ...?

DICKIE.

Mingled your tears? I think hers were about as real as yours.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

And she led me on to say one thing after another.

DICKIE.

I think she's been pulling both our legs successfully.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

How on earth am I going to meet her now?

DICKIE.

She'll be all right. She'll be just as charming as ever.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

You fool! Don't you see that if she's charming to me it's because she thinks she's prettier than I am, and cleverer than I am, and more fascinating than I am? She doesn't even despise me, she's indifferent to me.

[_ She goes to the glass and looks at herself._

MRS. FERGUSSON.

[_ Furiously._] A change of air.

[_ The door opens slowly, and _ PENELOPE _ comes in. She has changed into motoring things._ MRS. FERGUSSON _ gives a sudden gasp as she sees her and turns her face away. For a moment _ PENELOPE _ stands still, looking at them reflectively_. DICKIE _ aimlessly arranges things on a table_.]

PENELOPE.

[_ With a faint smile._] I'm not disturbing you, am I?

DICKIE.

Er....

PENELOPE.

Yes?

DICKIE.

Nothing.

[_Suddenly, with a sob_, MRS. FERGUSSON _sinks into a chair, and hiding her face bursts into tears_. PENELOPE _gives her a look of surprise and goes swiftly up to her. She leans over her, with her hand on_ MRS. FERGUSSON'S _shoulder_.

PENELOPE.

[_Almost tenderly_] What? Real tears?

MRS. FERGUSSON.

[_In a broken voice_] I feel so ridiculous.

PENELOPE.

[_With a little smile, as if she were talking to a child_] Don't. Don't cry.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

I look such a perfect fool.

PENELOPE.

It's so tiresome of our little sins to look foolish when they're found out, instead of wicked.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

I shall never respect myself again.

PENELOPE.

Dry your tears, dear. Uncle Davenport has just come, and he wants to know if it's respectable to ask you to lunch with him alone.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

[_With a suspicion of her old manner_] He's so sympathetic. I'd like to have a heart-to-heart talk with him.

PENELOPE.

You'll find the Carlton a most suitable place.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Are my eyes red?

PENELOPE.

Not a bit. I'll get you some powder.

[_She takes the powder-box off a table, and_ MRS. FERGUSSON
meditatively powders her nose]

MRS. FERGUSSON.

I like him. He talks of all the duchesses by their Christian names.

[PEYTON _announces_ BARLOW _and goes out_.

PEYTON.

Mr. Davenport Barlow.

[_As he comes in_, MRS. FERGUSSON _finally and entirely regains her usual manner_]

PENELOPE.

[_Kissing her uncle._] How d'you do?

BARLOW.

[_Advancing gallantly to_ MRS. FERGUSSON.] This is a pleasing surprise.
I was under the impression you were in Paris.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

No, poor Mrs. Mack was suddenly taken much worse.

BARLOW.

It is my gain.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

It's too nice of you to say so, but I'm leaving London at once all the same.

BARLOW.

But this is very sudden. What shall we do without you?

MRS. FERGUSSON.

You must blame Dr. O'Farrell.

DICKIE.

[Astonished.] Me?

MRS. FERGUSSON.

He tells me that now I'm quite strong enough for a foreign climate, and, of course, nothing will induce me to remain an hour away from my husband if I'm not obliged to.

BARLOW.

But I thought he was bravely fighting for his country.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Well, you see, there doesn't happen to be any fighting for him to do just now, and he's taken a very nice house at Malta. And I shall start to-morrow.

BARLOW.

This is more distressing than I can say. And are you going straight through?

MRS. FERGUSSON.

No, I shall stop a day or two in Paris on my way.

BARLOW.

How very singular! I had made all arrangements to go to Paris to-morrow myself.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

Then would you mind looking after me on the journey? You see, I'm a womanly woman, and I'm quite helpless in the train by myself.

BARLOW.

I should look upon it as a privilege. And perhaps we might go to one or two plays while you're there.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

If you'll promise not to take me to anything risky.

BARLOW.

Ha, ha, ha.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

[To PENELOPE.] Well, dear, I must say good-bye to you. I'm afraid we shan't meet again for some time.

PENELOPE.

Good-bye.

[They kiss one another affectionately.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

[To DICKIE.] Good-bye. If you hear of anything good on the Stock Exchange, you might let me know. I think I shall cut my loss on Johannesburg and New Jerusalems.

DICKIE.

I would.

MRS. FERGUSSON.

[To BARLOW.] I have a cab downstairs. Can I give you a lift anywhere?

BARLOW.

It would be very kind of you.

[With a nod to DICKIE she goes out.

BARLOW.

[Shaking hands with PENELOPE.] Charming creature. So dashing and a thorough gentlewoman.

PENELOPE.

Now, mind, Uncle Davenport, no pranks.

BARLOW.

My dear, I'm not only the soul of honour, but fifty-two.

[Exit.

PENELOPE.

[_As he goes out._] I suppose that does induce a platonic state of mind.

DICKIE.

[_With a sigh of relief._] Ouf!

[PENELOPE _turns to a glass to arrange her hat_. DICKIE _watches her with a smile_.]

Well?

PENELOPE.

[_Pretending to be surprised._] I beg your pardon?

DICKIE.

You promised to kiss me.

PENELOPE.

I didn't. I promised to allow myself to be kissed.

DICKIE.

[_Taking her in his arms and kissing her._] You little beast.

PENELOPE.

Finished?

DICKIE.

Not nearly.

PENELOPE.

Then I'm afraid you must go on another time. I've got a taxi at the door, and it's costing twopence a minute.

DICKIE.

[_Stepping back._] What d'you want a taxi for?

PENELOPE.

[_With a laugh._] I thought that would chill your ardour.

DICKIE.

You're not going on that beastly motor trip now?

PENELOPE.

Why on earth not?

DICKIE.

[_Half injured, half surprised._] Pen!

PENELOPE.

[_Looking at the watch on her wrist._] Good gracious, I'm keeping them waiting.

DICKIE.

[_Taking both her hands._] Now don't tease me. Go and take those horrid motor things off, and let's have a comfortable little tea together. And tell Peyton you're not at home.

PENELOPE.

I'm dreadfully sorry to disappoint you, but I'm afraid I can't break an engagement.

DICKIE.

You're not serious?

PENELOPE.

Abnormally.

DICKIE.

But, Pen dear, everything's different now. Don't you know that I love you?

PENELOPE.

It's very nice of you to say so.

DICKIE.

Doesn't it mean anything to you?

PENELOPE.

Not much.

DICKIE.

[Beginning to be rather perplexed.] But, Pen dear, pull yourself together. I love you just as much as you love me.

PENELOPE.

[With a little smile.] But what makes you think I love you?

DICKIE.

[Aghast.] You--you don't mean to say that you don't care for me any more?

PENELOPE.

[Judiciously.] I--no longer feel that the world is coming to an end when you go out of the room.

DICKIE.

What!... Why don't you say straight out that you can't bear the sight of me?

PENELOPE.

Because it wouldn't be quite true. I like you very well.

DICKIE.

Like me! I don't want you to like me. I want you to love me.

PENELOPE.

I wish I could. It would save a lot of bother.

DICKIE.

I don't understand. This is the most extraordinary thing I've ever heard in my life. I always thought you adored me.

PENELOPE.

Why?

DICKIE.

Because I adore you.

PENELOPE.

Since when?

DICKIE.

Always, always, always.

PENELOPE.

Fancy.

DICKIE.

Oh, I know I made a fool of myself. I shall never cease to regret it.
D'you think I was happy? D'you think I had a jolly time? Not much.... I
suppose it's that. You can't forgive me?

PENELOPE.

Nonsense. Of course I forgive you. It doesn't matter a bit.

DICKIE.

[With a gesture of desperation.] The whole thing's Greek to me. I
loved you always, Pen. I never ceased for a moment to love you.

PENELOPE.

My dear, you need not protest so much. It doesn't very much interest me
either way.

DICKIE.

What a fool I was! I ought to have known that if you took it so calmly
it could only be because you didn't care. If a woman doesn't make scenes
it can only mean that she doesn't love you.... You used to love me?

PENELOPE.

Yes.

DICKIE.

How can you be so fickle? I never thought you'd treat me like this.

[PENELOPE looks about as if she'd lost something.]

DICKIE.

What are you looking for?

PENELOPE.

I fancied you'd lost your sense of humour. I was just seeing if I could find it.

DICKIE.

How can I have a sense of humour when I'm suffering?

PENELOPE.

[Starting at the word.] Suffering?

DICKIE.

The tortures of the damned. I want you. I want your love.

[He does not see PENELOPE'S face. An expression of remorse comes into it at the pain she is causing him. She outlines a gesture towards him, but quickly restrains herself.]

PENELOPE.

[With a mocking laugh.] Poor darling.

DICKIE.

[Furiously.] Don't laugh at me.

PENELOPE.

I wasn't. I was quite sorry for you.

DICKIE.

D'you think I want your pity?

PENELOPE.

I'm very unfortunate. I seem quite unable to please you. I think it's

just as well that I'm going away for a week.

DICKIE.

[_Starting up.] No, you're not going away.

PENELOPE.

[_Raising her eyebrows.] What makes you think that?

DICKIE.

Because I forbid you to.

PENELOPE.

[_Smiling.] And are you under the delusion that at your command I shall fall flat on my face?

DICKIE.

I'm the master of this house, and I mean to make myself respected.

PENELOPE.

My dear, since you pay the rent and the taxes it's quite right that you should rule this house with a rod of iron if you wish it. Personally, at the moment I only want to get out of it.

DICKIE.

You're not going out of it.

PENELOPE.

Do you propose to keep me here against my will?

DICKIE.

Certainly, if needful.

PENELOPE.

H'm.

[_She gets up and goes to the door. He intercepts her, locks the door, and puts the key in his pocket._

PENELOPE.

Brute force.

DICKIE.

I think it's about time I showed you I'm not going to be made a perfect fool of.

[PENELOPE _shrugs her shoulders and sits down. Suddenly she chuckles._

DICKIE.

I don't see anything to laugh at.

PENELOPE.

I do. It's so mediæval. And are you going to feed me on bread and water?

DICKIE.

[_Angrily._] Ugh. [_He looks at her._] Now, look here, Pen, be reasonable about it. Why the deuce d'you want to go for this stupid trip?

PENELOPE.

I refuse to discuss the matter till you've opened the door.

DICKIE.

It's not the time of year for a motor trip. [_Pause._] PENELOPE _looks straight in front of her, taking no notice of what he says_.] It'll rain cats and dogs, and you'll catch a beastly cold. You'll probably get pneumonia. [_Pause._] I'm feeling awfully run down, and I shouldn't wonder if I were sickening for something myself. [PENELOPE _smothers a giggle and continues to stare into vacancy_. DICKIE _breaks out passionately_.] But don't you see that if I'm preventing you from going, it's because I can't bear to let you out of my sight? I want you. I want you always by me. I want you to love me.... Oh, if you only knew how much I love you, you wouldn't be so heartless.

PENELOPE.

[_Turning to him and speaking quite calmly._] But surely, if you cared for me, you wouldn't try to deprive me of a little enjoyment. You'd be willing to sacrifice yourself sometimes. You'd have a certain regard for my wishes. You wouldn't put every absurd obstacle in the way when the chance offers for me to have some amusement.

[DICKIE _ looks at her for a moment then turns away and walks up and down, with downcast head. He takes the key out of his pocket and silently puts it on the table beside her._

PENELOPE.

What does that mean?

DICKIE.

[In a broken voice.] You're quite right. I've simply been beastly selfish. I was only thinking of myself. I dare say I bore you. Perhaps you'll like me better when you've been away for a few days.

[PENELOPE _ is so moved that she can hardly keep up her acting any longer. She struggles with herself, and in a moment masters the desire to throw herself in his arms._

PENELOPE.

Since you locked the door, perhaps you'll be good enough to unlock it.

[Without a word he takes the key and goes to the door. He unlocks it._

PENELOPE.

Am I to understand that you offer no objection to my trip?

DICKIE.

If it'll give you pleasure to go, I shall be pleased to think you're happy. I only want you to be happy.

PENELOPE.

Would you rather I stayed?

DICKIE.

No.

[PENELOPE _gives a slight start. This is not at all what she wants._

PENELOPE.

Oh!

DICKIE.

I don't know what I shall do without you. I feel as if I were only now getting to know you. It's as though--oh, I don't know how to express it.

PENELOPE.

But you've just said you would rather I went.

DICKIE.

I don't want to think of myself any more. I want to think only of you. It makes me so happy to think of you, Pen. I want to sacrifice myself.

PENELOPE.

[_Relieved._] Will you go to my room and see if my bag has been taken down?

[_He goes out for a moment. She remains with an ecstatic look on her face. He comes back._]

DICKIE.

Yes. Peyton's taken it.

PENELOPE.

Then-[_she gives him a look from beneath her eye-lashes_]--ring and tell her to bring it up again.

DICKIE.

[_Hardly able to believe his good fortune._] Pen!

PENELOPE.

Are you pleased?

DICKIE.

Oh, you're much too good to me. I can't tell you how grateful I am. Oh, Pen, if you only knew how much I adore you!

[_He falls on his knees and passionately kisses her hands. She can hardly restrain herself from lifting him up and flinging her arms round his neck._]

DICKIE.

Is there any chance for me at all? D'you think you'll ever love me as you used to?

PENELOPE.

How can I tell?

DICKIE.

Oh, why can't we go back to the beginning? D'you remember how we loved one another then? You used to come down with me every day when I went out, and when I came back you always ran down to kiss me. And d'you remember how you used to sit on my chair in the morning while I smoked my pipe and we read the paper together?

PENELOPE.

[_Concealing a smile._] How you must have hated it!

DICKIE.

Hate it? I've never been so happy in my life.

PENELOPE.

At all events I hope we shall always continue to be good friends.

DICKIE.

[_Starting up._] Friends! What's the good of offering me your friendship when I'm starving for your love? How can you make me so unhappy?

PENELOPE.

[_Smiling indulgently._] But I'm not going to make you unhappy. I hope I shall always be very pleasant and agreeable.

DICKIE.

What d'you think I care for that? Pen, promise that you'll try to love me?

PENELOPE.

[_With a smile._] Yes, I'll try if you like.

DICKIE.

I'll make you love me. I'll never rest till I'm sure of your love.

PENELOPE.

And when you are sure of it I suppose you won't care twopence for me any more?

DICKIE.

Try me! Try me!

[_He kisses her hands again. He does not see her face. She smiles and shakes her head._

DICKIE.

I never knew that you were so adorable. It fills me with rapture merely to kiss your hands.

[PENELOPE _gives a little laugh and releases herself_.

PENELOPE.

Now I must just go to the Hendersons and tell them I can't come motoring.

DICKIE.

Can't you telephone? I don't want to let you out of my sight.

PENELOPE.

They're not on the telephone. It'll be more convenient for me to go.

DICKIE.

Very well. If you must, I suppose you must.

[_She smiles and goes to the door. When she reaches it he stops her._

DICKIE.

Oh, Pen!

PENELOPE.

Yes.

DICKIE.

At what time will you be back?

[_Recognising the phrase, she gives a gesture of amusement, quickly kisses her hand to him, and slips out of the door._

THE END.

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